

Jonas recognised the man. He was the Elder who had seemed separate from the others at the Ceremony, though he was dressed in the same special clothing that only Elders wore.

Jonas looked self-consciously into the pale eyes that mirrored his own.

‘Sir, I apologise for my lack of understanding ...’

He waited, but the man did not give the standard accepting-of-apology response.

After a moment, Jonas went on, ‘But I thought – I mean I *think*,’ he corrected, reminding himself that if precision of language were ever to be important, it was certainly important *now*, in the presence of this man, ‘that *you* are the Receiver of Memory. I’m only, well, I was only assigned, I mean selected, yesterday. I’m not anything at all. Not yet.’

The man looked at him thoughtfully, silently. It was a look that combined interest, curiosity, concern, and perhaps a little sympathy as well.

Finally he spoke. ‘Beginning today, this moment, at least to me, you are the Receiver.’

‘I have been the Receiver for a long time. A very, very long time. You can see that, can’t you?’

Jonas nodded. The man was wrinkled, and his eyes, though piercing in their unusual lightness, seemed tired.

The flesh around them was darkened into shadowed circles.

'I can see that you are very old,' Jonas responded with respect. The Old were always given the highest respect.

The man smiled. He touched the sagging flesh on his own face with amusement. 'I am not, actually, as old as I look,' he told Jonas. 'This job has aged me. I know I look as if I should be scheduled for release very soon. But actually I have a good deal of time left.

'I was pleased, though, when you were selected. It took them a long time. The failure of the previous selection was ten years ago, and my energy is starting to diminish. I need what strength I have remaining for your training. We have hard and painful work to do, you and I.

'Please sit down,' he said, and gestured towards the nearby chair. Jonas lowered himself on to the soft cushioned seat.

The man closed his eyes and continued speaking. 'When I became a Twelve, I was selected, as you were. I was frightened, as I'm sure you are.' He opened his eyes for a moment and peered at Jonas, who nodded.

The eyes closed again. 'I came to this very room to begin my training. It was such a long time ago.

'The previous Receiver seemed just as old to me as I do to you. He was just as tired as I am today.'

He sat forward suddenly, opened his eyes and said, 'You may ask questions. I have so little experience in describing this process. It is forbidden to talk of it.'

'I know, sir. I have read the instructions,' Jonas said.

'So I may neglect to make things as clear as I should.' The man chuckled. 'My job is important and has enormous honour. But that does not mean I am perfect, and when I tried before to train a successor, I failed. Please ask any questions that will help you.'

In his mind, Jonas had questions. A thousand. A *million* questions. As many questions as there were books lining the walls. But he did not ask one, not yet.

The man sighed, seeming to put his thoughts in order. Then he spoke again. 'Simply stated,' he said, 'although it's not really simple at all, my job is to transmit to you all the memories I have within me. Memories of the past.'

'Sir,' Jonas said tentatively, 'I would be very interested to hear the story of your life, and to listen to your memories.' 'I apologise for interrupting,' he added quickly.

The man waved his hand impatiently. 'No apologies in this room. We haven't time.'

'Well,' Jonas went on, uncomfortably aware that he might be interrupting again, 'I am really interested, I don't mean that I'm not. But I don't exactly understand why it's

so important. I could do some adult job in the community, and in my recreation time I could come and listen to the stories from your childhood. I'd like that. Actually,' he added, 'I've done that already, in the House of the Old. The Old like to tell about their childhoods, and it's always fun to listen.'

The man shook his head. 'No, no,' he said. 'I'm not being clear. It's not my past, not my childhood that I must transmit to you.'

He leaned back, resting his head against the back of the upholstered chair. 'It's the memories of the whole world,' he said with a sigh. 'Before you, before me, before the previous Receiver, and generations before him.'

Jonas frowned. 'The whole world?' he asked. 'I don't understand. Do you mean not just us? Not just the community? Do you mean Elsewhere, too?' He tried, in his mind, to grasp the concept. 'I'm sorry, sir. I don't understand exactly. Maybe I'm not smart enough. I don't know what you mean when you say "the whole world" or "generations before him". I thought there was only us. I thought there was only now.'

'There's much more. There's all that goes beyond – all that is Elsewhere – and all that goes back, and back, and back. I received all of those, when I was selected. And here in this room, all alone, I re-experience them again and

again. It is how wisdom comes. And how we shape our future.'

He rested for a moment, breathing deeply. 'I am so *weighted* with them,' he said.

Jonas felt a terrible concern for the man, suddenly.

'It's as if ...' The man paused, seeming to search his mind for the right words of description. 'It's like going downhill through deep snow on a sledge,' he said, finally. 'At first it's exhilarating: the speed; the sharp, clear air, but then the snow accumulates, builds up on the runners, and you slow, you have to push hard to keep going, and—'

He shook his head suddenly, and peered at Jonas. 'That meant nothing to you, did it?' he asked.

Jonas was confused. 'I didn't understand it, sir.'

'Of course you didn't. You don't know what snow is, do you?'

Jonas shook his head.

'Or a sledge? Runners?'

'No, sir,' Jonas said.

'Downhill? The term means nothing to you?'

'Nothing, sir.'

'Well, it's a place to start. I'd been wondering how to begin. Move to the bed, and lie face down. Remove your tunic first.'

Jonas did so, a little apprehensively. Beneath his bare

chest, he felt the soft folds of the magnificent cloth that covered the bed. He watched as the man rose and moved first to the wall where the speaker was. It was the same sort of speaker that occupied a place in every dwelling, but one thing about it was different. This one had a switch, which the man deftly snapped to the end that said OFF.

Jonas almost gasped aloud. To have the power to turn the speaker *off*! It was an astonishing thing.

Then the man moved with surprising quickness to the corner where the bed was. He sat on a chair beside Jonas, who was motionless, waiting for what would happen next.

'Close your eyes. Relax. This will not be painful.'

Jonas remembered that he was allowed, that he had even been encouraged, to ask questions. 'What are you going to do, sir?' he asked, hoping that his voice didn't betray his nervousness.

'I am going to transmit the memory of snow,' the old man said, and placed his hands on Jonas's bare back.



Jonas felt nothing unusual at first. He felt only the light touch of the old man's hands on his back.

He tried to relax, to breathe evenly. The room was absolutely silent, and for a moment Jonas feared that he might disgrace himself now, on the first day of his training, by falling asleep.

Then he shivered. He realised that the touch of the hands felt, suddenly, cold. At the same instant, breathing in, he felt the air change, and his very breath was cold. He licked his lips, and in doing so, his tongue touched the suddenly chilled air.

It was very startling; but he was not at all frightened, now. He was filled with energy, and he breathed again, feeling the sharp intake of frigid air. Now, too, he could feel cold air swirling around his entire body. He felt it blow against his hands where they lay at his sides, and over his back.

The touch of the man's hands seemed to have disappeared.

Now he became aware of an entirely new sensation: pinpricks? No, because they were soft and without pain. Tiny, cold, featherlike feelings peppered his body and face. He put out his tongue again, and caught one of the dots of cold upon it. It disappeared from his awareness instantly; but he caught another, and another. The sensation made him smile.

One part of his consciousness knew that he was still lying there, on the bed, in the Annexe room. Yet another, separate part of his being was upright now, in a sitting position, and beneath him he could feel that he was not on the soft decorated bedcovering at all, but rather seated on a flat, hard surface. His hands now held (though at the same time they were still motionless at his sides) a rough, damp rope.

And he could *see*, though his eyes were closed. He could see a bright, whirling torrent of crystals in the air around him, and he could see them gather on the backs of his hands, like cold fur.

His breath was visible.

Beyond, through the swirl of what he now, somehow, perceived was the thing the old man had spoken of — *snow* — he could look out and down a great distance. He was up

high somewhere. The ground was thick with the furry snow, but he sat slightly above it on a hard, flat object.

Sledge, he knew abruptly. He was sitting on a thing called *sledge*. And the sledge itself seemed to be poised at the top of a long, extended mound that rose from the very land where he was. Even as he thought the word 'mound', his new consciousness told him *hill*.

Then the sledge, with Jonas himself upon it, began to move through the snowfall, and he understood instantly that now he was going downhill. No voice made an explanation. The experience explained itself to him.

His face cut through the frigid air as he began the descent, moving through the substance called snow on the vehicle called sledge, which propelled itself on what he now knew without doubt to be *runners*.

Comprehending all of those things as he sped downwards, he was free to enjoy the breathless glee that overwhelmed him: the speed, the clear cold air, the total silence, the feeling of balance and excitement and peace.

Then, as the angle of incline lessened, as the mound – the *hill* – flattened, nearing the bottom, the sledge's forward motion slowed. The snow was piled now around it, and he pushed with his body, moving it forward, not wanting the exhilarating ride to end.

Finally the obstruction of the piled snow was too

much for the thin runners of the sledge, and he came to a stop. He sat there for a moment, panting, holding the rope in his cold hands. Tentatively he opened his eyes – not his snow-hill-sledge eyes, for they had been open throughout the strange ride. He opened his ordinary eyes, and saw that he was still on the bed, that he had not moved at all.

The old man, still beside the bed, was watching him. 'How do you feel?' he asked.

Jonas sat up and tried to answer honestly. 'Surprised,' he said, after a moment.

The old man wiped his forehead with his sleeve. 'Whew,' he said. 'It was exhausting. But you know, even transmitting that tiny memory to you – I think it lightened me just a little.'

'Do you mean – you did say I could ask questions?'

The man nodded, encouraging his question.

'Do you mean that now you don't have the memory of it – of that ride on the sledge – any more?'

'That's right. A little weight off this old body.'

'But it was such fun! And now you don't have it any more! I *took* it from you!'

But the old man laughed. 'All I gave you was one ride, on one sledge, in one snow, on one hill. I have a whole world of them in my memory. I could give them to you

one by one, a thousand times, and there would still be more.'

'Are you saying that I – I mean we – could do it again?' Jonas asked. 'I'd really like to. I think I could steer, by pulling the rope. I didn't try this time, because it was so new.'

The old man, laughing, shook his head. 'Maybe another day, for a treat. But there's no time, really, just to play. I only wanted to begin by showing you how it works.'

'Now,' he said, turning businesslike, 'lie back down. I want to—'

Jonas did. He was eager for whatever experience would come next. But he had, suddenly, so many questions.

'Why don't we have snow, and sledges, and hills?' he asked. 'And when did we, in the past? Did my parents have sledges when they were young? Did you?'

The old man shrugged and gave a short laugh. 'No,' he told Jonas. 'It's a very distant memory. That's why it was so exhausting – I had to tug it forward from many generations back. It was given to me when I was a new Receiver, and the previous Receiver had to pull it through a long time period, too.'

'But what happened to those things? Snow, and the rest of it?'

'Climate Control. Snow made growing food difficult, limited the agricultural periods. And unpredictable

weather made transportation almost impossible at times. It wasn't a practical thing, so it became obsolete when we went to Sameness.

'And hills, too,' he added. 'They made conveyance of goods unwieldy. Trucks; buses. Slowed them down. So...' He waved his hand, as if a gesture had caused hills to disappear. 'Sameness,' he concluded.

Jonas frowned. 'I wish we had those things, still. Just now and then.'

The old man smiled. 'So do I,' he said. 'But that choice is not ours.'

'But sir,' Jonas suggested, 'since you have so much power—'

The man corrected him. 'Honour,' he said firmly. 'I great honour. So will you. But you will find that that is not the same as power.'

'Lie quietly now. Since we've entered into the topic of climate, let me give you something else. And this time I'm not going to tell you the name of it, because I want to test the receiving. You should be able to perceive the name without being told. I gave away snow and sledge and downhill and runners by telling them to you in advance.'

Without being instructed, Jonas closed his eyes again. He felt the hands on his back again. He waited.

Now it came more quickly, the feelings. This time the

hands didn't become cold, but instead began to feel warm on his body. They moistened a little. The warmth spread, extending across his shoulders, up his neck, on to the side of his face. He could feel it through his clothed parts, too: a pleasant, all-over sensation; and when he licked his lips this time, the air was hot and heavy.

He didn't move. There was no sledge. His posture didn't change. He was simply alone somewhere, out of doors, lying down, and the warmth came from far above. It was not as exciting as the ride through the snowy air, but it was pleasurable and comforting.

Suddenly he perceived the word for it: *sunshine*. He perceived that it came from the sky.

Then it ended.

'Sunshine,' he said aloud, opening his eyes.

'Good. You did get the word. That makes my job easier. Not so much explaining.'

'And it came from the sky.'

'That's right,' the old man said. 'Just the way it used to.'

'Before Sameness. Before Climate Control,' Jonas added.

The man laughed. 'You receive well, and learn quickly. I'm very pleased with you. That's enough for today, I think. We're off to a good start.'

There was a question bothering Jonas. 'Sir,' he said, 'the Chief Elder told me – she told everyone – and you told

me, too, that it would be painful. So I was a little scared. But it didn't hurt at all. I really enjoyed it.' He looked quizzically at the old man.

The man sighed. 'I started you with memories of pleasure. My previous failure gave me the wisdom to do that.' He took a few deep breaths. 'Jonas,' he said, 'it *will* be painful. But it need not be painful yet.'

'I'm brave. I really am.' Jonas sat up a little straighter.

The old man looked at him for a moment. He smiled. 'I can see that,' he said. 'Well, since you asked the question – I think I have enough energy for one more transmission.

'Lie down once more. This will be the last today.'

Jonas obeyed cheerfully. He closed his eyes, waiting, and felt the hands again; then he felt the warmth again, the sunshine again, coming from the sky of this other consciousness that was so new to him. This time, as he lay basking in the wonderful warmth, he felt the passage of time. His real self was aware that it was only a minute or two; but his other, memory-receiving self felt hours pass in the sun. His skin began to sting. Restlessly he moved one arm, bending it, and felt a sharp pain in the crease of his inner arm at the elbow.

'Ouch,' he said loudly, and shifted on the bed. 'Owwwww,' he said, wincing at the shift, and even moving his mouth to speak made his face hurt.

He knew there was a word, but the pain kept him from grasping it.

Then it ended. He opened his eyes, wincing with discomfort. 'It hurt,' he told the man, 'and I couldn't get the word for it.'

'It was sunburn,' the old man told him.

'It hurt a *lot*,' Jonas said, 'but I'm glad you gave it to me. It was interesting. And now I understand better, what it meant, that there would be pain.'

The man didn't respond. He sat silently for a second. Finally he said, 'Get up, now. It's time for you to go home.'

They both walked to the centre of the room. Jonas put his tunic back on. 'Goodbye, sir,' he said. 'Thank you for my first day.'

The old man nodded to him. He looked drained, and a little sad.

'Sir?' Jonas said shyly.

'Yes? Do you have a question?'

'It's just that I don't know your name. I thought you were the Receiver, but you say that now *I'm* the Receiver. So I don't know what to call you.'

The man had sat back down in the comfortable upholstered chair. He moved his shoulders around as if to ease away an aching sensation. He seemed terribly weary.

'Call me the Giver,' he told Jonas.



You slept soundly, Jonas?' his mother asked at the morning meal. 'No dreams?'

Jonas simply smiled and nodded, not ready to lie willing to tell the truth. 'I slept very soundly,' he said.

'I wish this one would,' his father said, leaning down from his chair to touch Gabriel's waving fist. The basket was on the floor beside him; in its corner, beside Gabriel's head, the stuffed hippo sat staring with its blank eyes.

'So do I,' Mother said, rolling her eyes. 'He's so fretful at night.'

Jonas had not heard the newchild during the night because as always, he *had* slept soundly. But it was not true that he had no dreams.

Again and again, as he slept, he had slid down that snow-covered hill. Always, in the dream, it seemed as if there were a destination: a *something* – he could not grasp

what – that lay beyond the place where the thickness of snow brought the sledge to a stop.

He was left, upon awakening, with the feeling that he wanted, even somehow needed, to reach the something that waited in the distance. The feeling that it was good. That it was welcoming. That it was significant.

But he did not know how to get there.

He tried to shed the leftover dream, gathering his schoolwork and preparing for the day.

School seemed a little different today. The classes were the same: language and communications; commerce and industry; science and technology; civil procedures and government. But during the breaks for recreation periods and the midday meal, the other new Twelves were abuzz with descriptions of their first day of training. All of them talked at once, interrupting each other, hastily making the required apology for interrupting, then forgetting again in the excitement of describing the new experiences.

Jonas listened. He was very aware of his own admonition not to discuss his training. But it would have been impossible anyway. There was no way to describe to his friends what he had experienced there in the Annexe room. How could you describe a sledge without describing a hill and snow; and how could you describe a hill and

snow to someone who had never felt height or wind or that feathery, magical cold?

Even trained for years as they all had been in precision of language, what words could you use which would give another the experience of sunshine?

So it was easy for Jonas to be still and to listen.

After school hours he rode again beside Fiona to the House of the Old.

'I looked for you yesterday,' she told him, 'so we could ride home together. Your bike was still there, and I waited for a little while. But it was getting late, so I went on home.'

'I apologise for making you wait,' Jonas said.

'I accept your apology,' she replied automatically.

'I stayed a little longer than I expected,' Jonas explained.

She pedalled forward silently, and he knew that she expected him to tell her why. She expected him to describe his first day of training. But to ask would have fallen into the category of rudeness.

'You've been doing so many volunteer hours with the Old,' Jonas said, changing the subject. 'There won't be much that you don't already know.'

'Oh, there's lots to learn,' Fiona replied. 'There's administrative work, and the dietary rules, and punishment for disobedience – did you know that they use a discipline

wand on the Old, the same as for small children? And there's occupational therapy, and recreational activities, and medications, and—'

They reached the building and braked their bikes.

'I really think I'll like it better than school,' Fiona confessed.

'Me too,' Jonas agreed, wheeling his bike into its place.

She waited for a second, as if, again, she expected him to go on. Then she looked at her watch, waved, and hurried towards the entrance.

Jonas stood for a moment beside his bike, startled. It had happened again: the thing that he thought of now as 'seeing beyond'. This time it had been Fiona who had undergone that fleeting indescribable change. As he looked up and towards her going through the door, it happened; she changed. Actually, Jonas thought, trying to recreate it in his mind, it wasn't Fiona in her entirety. It seemed to be just her hair. And just for that flickering instant.

He ran through it in his mind. It was clearly beginning to happen more often. First, the apple a few weeks before. The next time had been the faces in the audience at the Auditorium, just two days ago. Now, today, Fiona's hair.

Frowning, Jonas walked towards the Annexe. I will ask the Giver, he decided.

The old man looked up, smiling, when Jonas entered the room. He was already seated beside the bed, and he seemed more energetic today, slightly renewed, and glad to see Jonas.

'Welcome,' he said. 'We must get started. You're one minute late.'

'I apologi—' Jonas began, and then stopped, flustered, remembering there were to be no apologies.

He removed his tunic and went to the bed. 'I'm one minute late because something happened,' he explained. 'And I'd like to ask you about it, if you don't mind.'

'You may ask me anything.'

Jonas tried to sort it out in his mind so that he could explain it clearly. 'I think it's what you call seeing-beyond,' he said.

The Giver nodded. 'Describe it,' he said.

Jonas told him about the experience with the apple. Then the moment on the stage, when he had looked out and seen the same phenomenon in the faces of the crowd.

'Then today, just now, outside, it happened with my friend Fiona. She herself didn't change, exactly. But something about her changed for a second. Her hair looked different; but not in its shape, not in its length. I can't quite...' Jonas paused, frustrated by his inability to grasp and describe exactly what *had* occurred.

Finally he simply said, 'It changed. I don't know how, or why.'

'That's why I was one minute late,' he concluded, and looked questioningly at the Giver.

To his surprise, the old man asked him a question which seemed unrelated to the seeing-beyond. 'When I gave you the memory yesterday, the first one, the ride on the sledge, did you look around?'

Jonas nodded. 'Yes,' he said, 'but the stuff – I mean the snow – in the air made it hard to see anything.'

'Did you look at the sledge?'

Jonas thought back. 'No. I only felt it under me. I dreamed of it last night, too. But I don't remember *seeing* the sledge in my dream, either. Just feeling it.'

The Giver seemed to be thinking.

'When I was observing you, before the selection, I perceived that you probably had the capacity, and what you describe confirms that. It happened somewhat differently to me,' The Giver told him. 'When I was just your age – about to become the new Receiver – I began to experience it, though it took a different form. With me it was . . . well, I won't describe that now; you wouldn't understand it yet.'

'But I think I can guess how it's happening with you. Let me just make a little test, to confirm my guess. Lie down.'

Jonas lay on the bed again with his hands at his sides. He felt comfortable here now. He closed his eyes and waited for the familiar feel of the Giver's hands on his back.

But it didn't come. Instead, the Giver instructed him, 'Call back the memory of the ride on the sledge. Just the *beginning* of it, where you're at the top of the hill, before the slide starts. And this time, look down at the sledge.'

Jonas was puzzled. He opened his eyes. 'Excuse me,' he asked politely, 'but don't *you* have to give me the memory?'

'It's your memory, now. It's not mine to experience any longer. I gave it away.'

'But how can I call it back?'

'You can remember last year, or the year that you were a Seven, or a Five, can't you?'

'Of course.'

'It's much the same. Everyone in the community has one-generation memories like those. But now you will be able to go back farther. Try. Just concentrate.'

Jonas closed his eyes again. He took a deep breath and sought the sledge and the hill and the snow in his consciousness.

There they were, with no effort. He was again sitting in that whirling world of snowflakes, atop the hill.

Jonas grinned with delight, and blew his own steamy breath into view. Then, as he had been instructed, he looked down. He saw his own hands, furred again with snow, holding the rope. He saw his legs, and moved them aside for a glimpse of the sledge beneath.

Dumbfounded, he stared at it. This time it was not a fleeting impression. This time the sledge had – and continued to have, as he blinked, and stared at it again – that same mysterious quality that the apple had had so briefly. And Fiona's hair. The sledge did not change. It simply was – whatever the thing was.

Jonas opened his eyes and was still on the bed. The Giver was watching him curiously.

'Yes,' Jonas said slowly. 'I saw it, in the sledge.'

'Let me try one more thing. Look over there, to the bookcase. Do you see the very top row of books, the ones behind the table, on the top shelf?'

Jonas sought them with his eyes. He stared at them, and they changed. But the change was fleeting. It slipped away the next instant.

'It happened,' Jonas said. 'It happened to the books, but it went away again.'

'I'm right, then,' the Giver said. 'You're beginning to see the colour red.'

'The what?'

The Giver sighed. 'How to explain this? Once, back in the time of the memories, everything had a shape and size, the way things still do, but they also had a quality called *colour*.

'There were a lot of colours, and one of them was called red. That's the one you are starting to see. Your friend Fiona has red hair – quite distinctive, actually; I've noticed it before. When you mentioned Fiona's hair, it was the clue that told me you were probably beginning to see the colour red.'

'And the faces of people? The ones I saw at Ceremony?'

The Giver shook his head. 'No, flesh isn't red. But it has red tones in it. There was a time, actually – you'll see this in the memories later – when flesh was many different colours. That was before we went to Sameness. Today flesh is all the same, and what you saw was the red tones. Probably when you saw the faces take on colour it wasn't as deep or vibrant as the apple, or your friend's hair.'

The Giver chuckled, suddenly. 'We've never completely mastered Sameness. I suppose the genetic scientists are still hard at work trying to work the kinks out. Hair like Fiona's must drive them crazy.'

Jonas listened, trying hard to comprehend. 'And the

sledge?’ he said. ‘It had that same thing: the colour red. But it didn’t *change*, Giver. It just *was*.’

‘Because it’s a memory from the time when colour *was*.’

‘It was so – oh, I wish language were more precise! The red was so beautiful!’

The Giver nodded. ‘It is.’

‘Do you see it all the time?’

‘I see all of them. All the colours.’

‘Will I?’

‘Of course. When you receive the memories. You have the capacity to see beyond. You’ll gain wisdom, then, along with colours. And lots more.’

Jonas wasn’t interested, just then, in wisdom. It was the colours that fascinated him. ‘Why can’t everyone see them? Why did colours disappear?’

The Giver shrugged. ‘Our people made that choice, the choice to go to Sameness. Before my time, before the previous time, back and back and back. We relinquished colour when we relinquished sunshine and did away with differences.’ He thought for a moment. ‘We gained control of many things. But we had to let go of others.’

‘We shouldn’t have!’ Jonas said fiercely.

The Giver looked startled at the certainty of Jonas’s reaction. Then he smiled wryly. ‘You’ve come very quickly

to that conclusion,' he said. 'It took me many years. Maybe your wisdom will come much more quickly than mine.'

He glanced at the wall clock. 'Lie back down, now. We have so much to do.'

'Giver,' Jonas asked as he arranged himself again on the bed, 'how did it happen to you when you were becoming the Receiver? You said that the seeing-beyond happened to you, but not the same way.'

The hands came to his back. 'Another day,' the Giver said gently. 'I'll tell you another day. Now we must work. And I've thought of a way to help you with the concept of colour.'

'Close your eyes and be still, now. I'm going to give you a memory of a rainbow.'



Days went by, and weeks. Jonas learned, through the memories, the names of colours; and now he began to see them all, in his ordinary life (though he knew it was ordinary no longer, and would never be again). But they didn't last. There would be a glimpse of green – the landscaped lawn around the Central Plaza; a bush on the riverbank. The bright orange of pumpkins being trucked in from the agricultural fields beyond the community boundary – seen in an instant, the flash of brilliant colour, but gone again, returning to their flat and hueless shade.

The Giver told him that it would be a very long time before he had the colours to keep.

'But I want them!' Jonas said angrily. 'It isn't fair that nothing has colour!'

'Not fair?' The Giver looked at Jonas curiously. 'Explain what you mean.'

'Well ...' Jonas had to stop and think it through. 'If everything's the same, then there aren't any choices! I want to wake up in the morning and *decide* things! A blue tunic, or a red one?'

He looked down at himself, at the colourless fabric of his clothing. 'But it's all the same, always.' Then he laughed a little. 'I know it's not important, what you wear. It doesn't matter. But—'

'It's the choosing that's important, isn't it?' The Giver asked him.

Jonas nodded. 'My little brother—' he began, and then corrected himself. 'No, that's inaccurate. He's not my brother, not really. But this newchild that my family takes care of – his name's Gabriel?'

'Yes, I know about Gabriel.'

'Well, he's right at the age where he's learning so much. He grabs toys when we hold them in front of him – my father says he's learning small-muscle control. And he's really cute.'

The Giver nodded.

'But now that I can see colours, at least sometimes, I was just thinking: what if we could hold up things that

were bright red, or bright yellow, and he could *choose*? Instead of the Sameness.'

'He might make wrong choices.'

'Oh.' Jonas was silent for a minute. 'Oh, I see what you mean. It wouldn't matter for a newchild's toy. But later it *does* matter, doesn't it? We don't dare to let people make choices of their own.'

'Not safe?' The Giver suggested.

'Definitely not safe,' Jonas said with certainty. 'What if they were allowed to choose their own mate? And chose *wrong*? Or what if,' he went on, almost laughing at the absurdity, 'they chose their own *jobs*?'

'Frightening, isn't it?' The Giver said.

Jonas chuckled. 'Very frightening. I can't even imagine it. We really have to protect people from wrong choices.'

'It's safer.'

'Yes,' Jonas agreed. 'Much safer.'

But when the conversation turned to other things, Jonas was left, still, with a feeling of frustration that he didn't understand.

He found that he was often angry, now: irrationally angry at his groupmates, that they were satisfied with their lives which had none of the vibrance his own was taking

on. And he was angry at himself, that he could not change that for them.

He tried. Without asking permission from the Giver, because he feared – or knew – that it would be denied, he tried to give his new awareness to his friends.

'Asher,' Jonas said one morning, 'look at those flowers very carefully.' They were standing beside a bed of geraniums planted near the Hall of Open Records. He put his hands on Asher's shoulders, and concentrated on the red of the petals, trying to hold it as long as he could, and trying at the same time to transmit the awareness of red to his friend.

'What's the matter?' Asher asked uneasily. 'Is something wrong?' He moved away from Jonas's hands. It was extremely rude for one citizen to touch another outside of family units.

'No, nothing. I thought for a minute that they were wilting, and we should let the Gardening Crew know they needed more watering.' Jonas sighed, and turned away.

One evening he came home from his training weighted with new knowledge. The Giver had chosen a startling and disturbing memory that day. Under the touch of his hands, Jonas had found himself suddenly in a place that was completely alien: hot and windswept under a vast blue sky. There were tufts of sparse grass, a

few bushes and rocks, and nearby he could see an area of thicker vegetation: broad, low trees outlined against the sky. He could hear noises: the sharp crack of weapons – he perceived the word *guns* – and then shouts, and an immense crashing thud as something fell, tearing branches from the trees.

He heard voices calling to one another. Peering from the place where he stood hidden behind some shrubbery, he was reminded of what the Giver had told him, that there had been a time when flesh had different colours. Two of these men had dark brown skin; the others were light. Going closer, he watched them hack the tusks from a motionless elephant on the ground and haul them away, spattered with blood. He felt himself overwhelmed with a new perception of the colour he knew as red.

Then the men were gone, speeding towards the horizon in a vehicle that spat pebbles from its whirling tyres. One hit his forehead and stung him there. But the memory continued, though Jonas ached now for it to end.

Now he saw another elephant emerge from the place where it had stood hidden in the trees. Very slowly it walked to the mutilated body and looked down. With its sinuous trunk it stroked the huge corpse; then it reached up, broke some leafy branches with a snap, and draped them over the mass of torn thick flesh.

Finally it tilted its massive head, raised its trunk, and roared into the empty landscape. Jonas had never heard such a sound. It was a sound of rage and grief and it seemed never to end.

He could still hear it when he opened his eyes and lay anguished on the bed where he received the memories. It continued to roar into his consciousness as he pedalled slowly home.

'Lily,' he asked that evening when his sister took her comfort object, the stuffed elephant, from the shelf, 'did you know that once there really were elephants? Live ones?'

She glanced down at the ragged comfort object and grinned. 'Right,' she said sceptically. 'Sure, Jonas.'

Jonas went and sat beside them while his father untied Lily's hair ribbons and combed her hair. He placed one hand on each of their shoulders. With all of his being he tried to give each of them a piece of the memory: not of the tortured cry of the elephant, but of the *being* of the elephant, of the towering, immense creature and the meticulous touch with which it had tended its friend at the end.

But his father had continued to comb Lily's long hair, and Lily, impatient, had finally wiggled under her brother's touch. 'Jonas,' she said, 'you're *hurting* me with your hand.'

'I apologise for hurting you, Lily,' Jonas mumbled, and took his hand away.

'Ccept your apology,' Lily responded indifferently, stroking the lifeless elephant.

'Giver,' Jonas asked once, as they prepared for the day's work, 'don't you have a spouse? Aren't you allowed to apply for one?' Although he was exempted from the rules against rudeness, he was aware that this was a rude question. But the Giver had encouraged all of his questions, not seeming to be embarrassed or offended by even the most personal.

The Giver chuckled. 'No, there's no rule against it. And I did have a spouse. You're forgetting how old I am, Jonas. My former spouse lives now with the Childless Adults.'

'Oh, of course.' Jonas *had* forgotten the Giver's obvious age. When adults of the community became older, their lives became different. They were no longer needed to create family units. Jonas's own parents, when he and Lily were grown, would go to live with the Childless Adults.

'You'll be able to apply for a spouse, Jonas, if you want to. I'll warn you, though, that it will be difficult. Your living arrangements will have to be different from those of most

family units, because the books are forbidden to citizens. You and I are the only ones with access to the books.'

Jonas glanced around at the astonishing array of volumes. From time to time, now, he could see their colours. With their hours together, his and the Giver's, consumed by conversation and by the transmission of memories, Jonas had not yet opened any of the books. But he read the titles here and there, and knew that they contained all of the knowledge of centuries, and that one day they would belong to him.

'So if I have a spouse, and maybe children, I will have to hide the books from them?'

The Giver nodded. 'I wasn't permitted to share the books with my spouse, that's correct. And there are other difficulties, too. You remember the rule that says the new Receiver can't talk about his training?'

Jonas nodded. Of course he remembered. It had turned out, by far, to be the most frustrating of the rules he was required to obey.

'When you become the official Receiver, when we're finished here, you'll be given a whole new set of rules. Those are the rules that I obey. And it won't surprise you that I am forbidden to talk about my work to anyone except the new Receiver. That's you, of course.

'So there will be a whole part of your life which you

won't be able to share with a family. It's hard, Jonas. It was hard for me.

'You do understand, don't you, that this *is* my life? The memories?'

Jonas nodded again, but he was puzzled. Didn't life consist of the things you did each day? There wasn't anything else, really. 'I've seen you taking walks,' he said.

The Giver sighed. 'I walk. I eat at mealtimes. And when I am called by the Committee of Elders, I appear before them, to give them counsel and advice.'

'Do you advise them often?' Jonas was a little frightened at the thought that one day he would be the one to advise the ruling body.

But the Giver said no. 'Rarely. Only when they are faced with something that they have not experienced before. Then they call upon me to use the memories and advise them. But it very seldom happens. Sometimes I wish they'd ask for my wisdom more often – there are so many things I could tell them; things I wish they would change. But they don't want change. Life here is so orderly, so predictable – so painless. It's what they've chosen.'

'I don't know why they even *need* a Receiver, then, if they never call upon him,' Jonas commented.

'They need me. And you,' the Giver said, but didn't explain. 'They were reminded of that ten years ago.'

'What happened ten years ago?' Jonas asked. 'Oh, I know. You tried to train a successor and it failed. Why? Why did that remind them?'

The Giver smiled grimly. 'When the new Receiver failed, the memories that she had received were released. They didn't come back to me. They went ...'

He paused, and seemed to be struggling with the concept. 'I don't know, exactly. They went to the place where memories once existed before Receivers were created. Somewhere out *there*...' He gestured vaguely with his arm. 'And then the people had access to them. Apparently that's the way it was, once. Everyone had access to memories.

'It was chaos,' he said. 'They really suffered for a while. Finally it subsided as the memories were assimilated. But it certainly made them aware of how they need a Receiver to contain all that pain. And knowledge.'

'But you have to suffer like that all the time,' Jonas pointed out.

The Giver nodded. 'And you will. It's my life. It will be yours.'

Jonas thought about it, about what it would be like for him. 'Along with walking and eating and...' He looked around the walls of books. 'Reading? That's it?'

The Giver shook his head. 'Those are simply the things that I *do*. My *life* is here.'

'In this room?'

The Giver shook his head. He put his hands to his own face, to his chest. 'No. Here, in my being. Where the memories are.'

'My Instructors in science and technology have taught us about how the brain works,' Jonas told him eagerly. 'It's full of electrical impulses. It's like a computer. If you stimulate one part of the brain with an electrode, it—' He stopped talking. He could see an odd look on the Giver's face.

'They know nothing,' the Giver said bitterly.

Jonas was shocked. Since the first day in the Annex room, they had together disregarded the rules about rudeness, and Jonas felt comfortable with that now. But this was different, and far beyond rude. This was a terrible accusation. What if someone had heard?

He glanced quickly at the wall speaker, terrified that the Committee might be listening as they could at any time. But, as always during their sessions together, the switch had been turned to OFF.

'Nothing?' Jonas whispered nervously. 'But my instructors—'

The Giver flicked his hand as if brushing something aside. 'Oh, your instructors are well trained. They know their scientific facts. *Everyone* is well trained for his job.'

'It's just that... without the memories it's all meaningless. They gave that burden to me. And to the previous Receiver. And the one before him.'

'And back and back and back,' Jonas said, knowing the phrase that always came.

The Giver smiled, though his smile was oddly harsh. 'That's right. And next it will be you. A great honour.'

'Yes, sir. They told me that at the Ceremony. The very highest honour.'

Some afternoons the Giver sent him away without training. Jonas knew, on days when he arrived to find the Giver hunched over, rocking his body slightly back and forth, his face pale, that he would be sent away.

'Go,' the Giver would tell him tensely. 'I'm in pain today. Come back tomorrow.'

On those days, worried and disappointed, Jonas would walk alone beside the river. The paths were empty of people except for the few Delivery Crews and Landscape Workers here and there. Small children were all at the Childcare Centre after school, and the older ones busy with volunteer hours or training.

By himself, he tested his own developing memory. He watched the landscape for glimpses of the green that he knew was embedded in the shrubbery; when it came

flickering into his consciousness, he focused upon it, keeping it there, darkening it, holding it in his vision as long as possible until his head hurt and he let it fade away.

He stared at the flat, colourless sky, bringing blue from it, and remembered sunshine until finally, for an instant, he could feel warmth.

He stood at the foot of the bridge that spanned the river, the bridge that citizens were allowed to cross only on official business. Jonas had crossed it on school trips, visiting the outlying communities, and he knew that the land beyond the bridge was much the same, flat and well ordered, with fields for agriculture. The other communities he had seen on visits were essentially the same as his own; the only differences were slightly altered styles of dwellings, slightly different schedules in the schools.

He wondered what lay in the far distance where he had never gone. The land didn't *end* beyond those nearby communities. Were there *hills* Elsewhere? Were there vast wind-torn areas like the place he had seen in memory, the place where the elephant died?

'Giver,' he asked one afternoon following a day when he had been sent away, 'what causes you pain?'

When the Giver was silent, Jonas continued. 'The Chief Elder told me, at the beginning, that the receiving

of memory causes terrible pain. And you described for me that the failure of the last new Receiver released painful memories to the community.

'But I haven't suffered, Giver. Not really.' Jonas smiled. 'Oh, I remember the sunburn you gave me on the very first day. But that wasn't so terrible. What is it that makes you suffer so much? If you gave some of it to me, maybe your pain would be less.'

The Giver nodded. 'Lie down,' he said. 'It's time, I suppose. I can't shield you forever. You'll have to take it all on eventually.'

'Let me think,' he went on, when Jonas was on the bed, waiting, a little fearful.

'All right,' the Giver said after a moment, 'I've decided. We'll start with something familiar. Let's go once again to a hill, and a sledge.'

He placed his hands on Jonas's back.



It was much the same, this memory, though the hill seemed to be a different one, steeper, and the snow was not falling as thickly as it had before.

It was colder, also, Jonas perceived. He could see, as he sat waiting at the top of the hill, that the snow beneath the sledge was not thick and soft as it had been before, but hard, and coated with bluish ice.

The sledge moved forward, and Jonas grinned with delight, looking forward to the breathtaking slide down through the invigorating air.

But the runners, this time, couldn't slice through the frozen expanse as they had on the other, snow-cushioned hill. They skittered sideways and the sledge gathered speed. Jonas pulled at the rope, trying to steer, but the steepness and speed took control from his hands and he was no longer enjoying the feeling of freedom but instead,

terrified, was at the mercy of the wild acceleration downwards over the ice.

Sideways, spinning, the sledge hit a bump in the hill and Jonas was jarred loose and thrown violently into the air. He fell with his leg twisted under him, and could hear the crack of bone. His face scraped along jagged edges of ice and when he came, at last, to a stop, he lay shocked and still, feeling nothing at first but fear.

Then, the first wave of pain. He gasped. It was as if a hatchet lay lodged in his leg, slicing through each nerve with a hot blade. In his agony he perceived the word 'fire' and felt flames licking at the torn bone and flesh. He tried to move, and could not. The pain grew.

He screamed. There was no answer.

Sobbing, he turned his head and vomited on to the frozen snow. Blood dripped from his face into the vomit.

'Nooooo!' he cried, and the sound disappeared into the empty landscape, into the wind.

Then, suddenly, he was in the Annexe room again, writhing on the bed. His face was wet with tears.

Able to move now, he rocked his own body back and forth, breathing deeply to release the remembered pain.

He sat, and looked at his own leg, where it lay straight on the bed, unbroken. The brutal slice of pain was gone. But the leg ached horribly, still, and his face felt raw.

'May I have relief-of-pain, please?' he begged. It was always provided in his everyday life for the bruises and wounds, for a mashed finger, a stomach ache, a skinned knee from a fall from a bike. There was always a daub of anaesthetic ointment, or a pill; or in severe instances, an injection that brought complete and instantaneous deliverance.

But the Giver said no, and looked away.

Limping, Jonas walked home, pushing his bicycle, that evening. The sunburn pain had been so small, in comparison, and had not stayed with him. But this ache lingered.

It was not unendurable, as the pain on the hill had been. Jonas tried to be brave. He remembered that the Chief Elder had said he was brave.

'Is something wrong, Jonas?' his father asked at the evening meal. 'You're so quiet tonight. Aren't you feeling well? Would you like some medication?'

But Jonas remembered the rules. No medication for anything related to his training.

And no discussion of his training. At the time for sharing-of-feelings, he simply said that he felt tired, that his school lessons had been unusually demanding that day.

He went to his sleepingroom early, and from behind

the closed door he could hear his parents and sister laughing as they gave Gabriel his evening bath.

They have never known pain, he thought. The realisation made him feel desperately lonely, and he rubbed his throbbing leg. He eventually slept. Again and again he dreamed of the anguish and the isolation on the forsaken hill.

The daily training continued, and now it always included pain. The agony of the fractured leg began to seem no more than a mild discomfort as the Giver led Jonas firmly, little by little, into the deep and terrible suffering of the past. Each time, in his kindness, the Giver ended the afternoon with a colour-filled memory of pleasure: a brisk sail on a blue-green lake; a meadow dotted with yellow wildflowers; an orange sunset behind mountains.

It was not enough to assuage the pain that Jonas was beginning, now, to know.

'*Why?*' Jonas asked him after he had received a tortuous memory in which he had been neglected and unfed; the hunger had caused excruciating spasms in his empty, distended stomach. He lay on the bed, aching. 'Why do you and I have to hold these memories?'

'It gives us wisdom,' The Giver replied. 'Without

wisdom I could not fulfil my function of advising the Committee of Elders when they call upon me.'

'But what wisdom do you get from hunger?' Jonas groaned. His stomach still hurt, though the memory had ended.

'Some years ago,' the Giver told him, 'before your birth, a lot of citizens petitioned the Committee of Elders. They wanted to increase the rate of births. They wanted each Birthmother to be assigned four births instead of three, so that the population would increase and there would be more Labourers available.'

Jonas nodded, listening. 'That makes sense.'

'The idea was that certain family units could accommodate an additional child.'

Jonas nodded again. 'Mine could,' he pointed out. 'We have Gabriel this year, and it's fun, having a third child.'

'The Committee of Elders sought my advice,' the Giver said. 'It made sense to them, too, but it was a new idea, and they came to me for wisdom.'

'And you used your memories?'

The Giver said yes. 'And the strongest memory that came was hunger. It came from many generations back. *Centuries* back. The population had got so big that hunger

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'And you used your memories?'

The Giver said yes. 'And the strongest memory that came was hunger. It came from many generations back. *Centuries* back. The population had got so big that hunger

was everywhere. Excruciating hunger and starvation. It was followed by warfare.'

Warfare? It was a concept Jonas did not know. But hunger was familiar to him now. Unconsciously he rubbed his own abdomen, recalling the pain of its unfulfilled needs. 'So you described that to them?'

'They don't want to hear about pain. They just seek the advice. I simply advised them against increasing the population.'

'But you said that that was before my birth. They hardly ever come to you for advice. Only when they – what was it you said? When they have a problem they've never faced before. When did it happen last?'

'Do you remember the day when the plane flew over the community?'

'Yes. I was scared.'

'So were they. They prepared to shoot it down. But they sought my advice. I told them to wait.'

'But how did you know? How did you know the pilot was lost?'

'I didn't. I used my wisdom, from the memories. I knew that there had been times in the past – terrible times – when people had destroyed others in haste, in fear, and had brought about their own destruction.'

Jonas realised something. 'That means,' he said slowly,

‘that you have memories of destruction. And you have to give them to me, too, because I have to get the wisdom.’

The Giver nodded.

‘But it will hurt,’ Jonas said. It wasn’t a question.

‘It will hurt terribly,’ the Giver agreed.

‘But why can’t *everyone* have the memories? I think it would seem a little easier if the memories were shared. You and I wouldn’t have to bear so much by ourselves, if everybody took a part.’

The Giver sighed. ‘You’re right,’ he said. ‘But then everyone would be burdened and pained. They don’t want that. And that’s the real reason the Receiver is so vital to them, and so honoured. They selected me – and you – to lift that burden from themselves.’

‘When did they decide that?’ Jonas asked angrily. ‘It wasn’t fair. Let’s change it!’

‘How do you suggest we do that? I’ve never been able to think of a way, and I’m supposed to be the one with all the wisdom.’

‘But there are two of us now,’ Jonas said eagerly. ‘*Together* we can think of something!’

The Giver watched him with a wry smile.

‘Why can’t we just apply for a change of rules?’ Jonas suggested.

The Giver laughed; then Jonas, too, chuckled reluctantly.

'The decision was made long before my time or yours,' the Giver said, 'and before the previous Receiver, and...' He waited.

'Back and back and back.' Jonas repeated the familiar phrase. Sometimes it had seemed humorous to him. Sometimes it had seemed meaningful and important.

Now it was ominous. It meant, he knew, that nothing could be changed.

The newchild, Gabriel, was growing, and successfully passed the tests of maturity that the Nurturers gave each month; he could sit alone, now, could reach for and grasp small play objects, and he had six teeth. During the daytime hours, Father reported, he was cheerful and seemed of normal intelligence. But he remained fretful at night, whimpering often, needing frequent attention.

'After all this extra time I've put in with him,' Father said one evening after Gabriel had been bathed and was lying, for the moment, hugging his hippo placidly in the small crib that had replaced the basket, 'I hope they're not going to decide to release him.'

'Maybe it would be for the best,' Mother suggested. 'I know you don't mind getting up with him at night. But the lack of sleep is awfully hard for me.'

'If they release Gabriel, can we get another newchild as

a visitor?' asked Lily. She was kneeling beside the crib, making funny faces at the little one, who was smiling back at her.

Jonas's mother rolled her eyes in dismay.

'No,' Father said, smiling. He ruffled Lily's hair. 'It's very rare, anyway, that a newchild's status is as uncertain as Gabriel's. It probably won't happen again, for a long time.'

'Anyway,' he sighed, 'they won't make the decision for a while. Right now we're all preparing for a release we'll probably have to make very soon. There's a Birthmother who's expecting twin males next month.'

'Oh, dear,' Mother said, shaking her head. 'If they're identical, I hope you're not the one assigned—'

'I am. I'm next on the list. I'll have to select the one to be nurtured, and the one to be released. It's usually not hard, though. Usually it's just a matter of birthweight. We release the smaller of the two.'

Jonas, listening, thought suddenly about the bridge and how, standing there, he had wondered what lay Elsewhere. Was there someone there, waiting, who would receive the tiny released twin? Would it grow up Elsewhere, not knowing, ever, that in this community lived a being who looked exactly the same?

For a moment he felt a tiny, fluttering hope that he knew was quite foolish. He hoped that it would be Larissa,

waiting. Larissa, the old woman he had bathed. He remembered her sparkling eyes, her soft voice, her low chuckle. Fiona had told him recently that Larissa had been released at a wonderful ceremony.

But he knew that the Old were not given children to raise. Larissa's life Elsewhere would be quiet and serene as befitted the Old; she would not welcome the responsibility of nurturing a newchild who needed feeding and care, and would likely cry at night.

'Mother? Father?' he said, the idea coming to him unexpectedly. 'Why don't we put Gabriel's crib in my room tonight? I know how to feed and comfort him, and it would let you and Father get some sleep.'

Father looked doubtful. 'You sleep so soundly, Jonas. What if his restlessness didn't wake you?'

It was Lily who answered that. 'If no one goes to tend Gabriel,' she pointed out, 'he gets very loud. He'd wake *all* of us, if Jonas slept through it.'

Father laughed. 'You're right, Lily-billy. All right, Jonas, let's try it, just for tonight. I'll take the night off and we'll let Mother get some sleep, too.'

Gabriel slept soundly for the earliest part of the night. Jonas, in his bed, lay awake for a while; from time to time he raised himself on one elbow, looking over at the crib.

The newchild was on his stomach, his arms relaxed beside his head, his eyes closed, and his breathing regular and undisturbed. Finally Jonas slept too.

Then, as the middle hours of the night approached, the noise of Gabe's restlessness woke Jonas. The newchild was turning under his cover, flailing his arms, and beginning to whimper.

Jonas rose and went to him. Gently he patted Gabriel's back. Sometimes that was all it took to lull him back to sleep. But the newchild still squirmed fretfully under his hand.

Still patting rhythmically, Jonas began to remember the wonderful sail that the Giver had given him not long before: a bright, breezy day on a clear turquoise lake, and above him the white sail of the boat billowing as he moved along in the brisk wind.

He was not aware of giving the memory; but suddenly he realised that it was becoming dimmer, that it was sliding through his hand into the being of the newchild. Gabriel became quiet. Startled, Jonas pulled back what was left of the memory with a burst of will. He removed his hand from the little back and stood quietly beside the crib.

To himself, he called the memory of the sail forward again. It was still there, but the sky was less blue, the gentle

motion of the boat slower, the water of the lake more murky and clouded. He kept it for a while, soothing his own nervousness at what had occurred, then let it go and returned to his bed.

Once more, towards dawn, the newchild woke and cried out. Again Jonas went to him. This time he quite deliberately placed his hand firmly on Gabriel's back, and released the rest of the calming day on the lake. Again Gabriel slept.

But now Jonas lay awake, thinking. He no longer had any more than a wisp of the memory, and he felt a small lack where it had been. He could ask the Giver for another sail, he knew. A sail perhaps on an ocean, next time, for Jonas had a memory of ocean, now, and knew what it was; he knew that there were sailboats there, too, in memories yet to be acquired.

He wondered, though, if he should confess to the Giver that he had given a memory away. He was not yet qualified to be a Giver himself; nor had Gabriel been selected to be a Receiver.

That he had this power frightened him. He decided not to tell.



Jonas entered the Annexe room and realised immediately that it was a day when he would be sent away. The Giver was rigid in his chair, his face in his hands.

‘I’ll come back tomorrow, sir,’ he said quickly. Then he hesitated. ‘Unless maybe there’s something I can do to help.’

The Giver looked up at him, his face contorted with suffering. ‘Please,’ he gasped, ‘take some of the pain.’

Jonas helped him to his chair at the side of the bed. Then he quickly removed his tunic and lay face down. ‘Put your hands on me,’ he directed, aware that in such anguish the Giver might need reminding.

The hands came, and the pain came with them and through them. Jonas braced himself and entered the memory which was torturing the Giver.

He was in a confused, noisy, foul-smelling place. It was daylight, early morning, and the air was thick with smoke that hung, yellow and brown, above the ground. Around him, everywhere, far across the expanse of what seemed to be a field, lay groaning men. A wild-eyed horse, its bridle torn and dangling, trotted frantically through the mounds of men, tossing its head, whinnying in panic. It stumbled, finally, then fell, and did not rise.

Jonas heard a voice next to him. 'Water,' the voice said in a parched, croaking whisper.

He turned his head towards the voice and looked into the half-closed eyes of a boy who seemed not much older than himself. Dirt streaked the boy's face and his matted blond hair. He lay sprawled, his grey uniform glistening with wet, fresh blood.

The colours of the carnage were grotesquely bright: the crimson wetness on the rough and dusty fabric, the ripped shreds of grass, startlingly green, in the boy's yellow hair.

The boy stared at him. 'Water,' he begged again. When he spoke, a new spurt of blood drenched the coarse cloth across his chest and sleeve.

One of Jonas's arms was immobilised with pain, and he could see through his own torn sleeve something that looked like ragged flesh and splintery bone. He tried his remaining arm and felt it move. Slowly he reached to

his side, felt the metal container there, and removed its cap, stopping the small motion of his hand now and then to wait for the surging pain to ease. Finally, when the container was open, he extended his arm slowly across the blood-soaked earth, inch by inch, and held it to the lips of the boy. Water trickled into the imploring mouth and down the grimy chin.

The boy sighed. His head fell back, his lower jaw dropping as if he had been surprised by something. A dull blankness slid slowly across his eyes. He was silent.

But the noise continued all around: the cries of the wounded men, the cries begging for water and for Mother and for death. Horses lying on the ground shrieked, raised their heads, and stabbed randomly towards the sky with their hooves.

From the distance, Jonas could hear the thud of cannons. Overwhelmed by pain, he lay there in the fearsome stench for hours, listened to the men and animals die, and learned what warfare meant.

Finally, when he knew that he could bear it no longer and would welcome death himself, he opened his eyes and was once again on the bed.

The Giver looked away, as if he could not bear to see what he had done to Jonas. 'Forgive me,' he said.



Jonas did not want to go back. He didn't want the memories, didn't want the honour, didn't want the wisdom, didn't want the pain. He wanted his childhood again, his scraped knees and ball games. He sat in his dwelling alone, watching through the window, seeing children at play, citizens bicycling home from uneventful days at work, ordinary lives free of anguish because he had been selected, as others before him had, to bear their burden.

But the choice was not his. He returned each day to the Annex room.

The Giver was gentle with him for many days following the terrible shared memory of war.

'There are so many good memories,' the Giver reminded Jonas. And it was true. By now Jonas had experienced countless bits of happiness, things he had never known of before.

He had seen a birthday party, with one child singled out and celebrated on his day, so that now he understood the joy of being an individual, special and unique and proud.

He had visited museums and seen paintings filled with all the colours he could now recognise and name.

In one ecstatic memory he had ridden a gleaming brown horse across a field that smelled of damp grass, and had dismounted beside a small stream from which both he and the horse drank cold, clear water. Now he understood about animals; and in the moment that the horse turned from the stream and nudged Jonas's shoulder affectionately with its head, he perceived the bonds between animal and human.

He had walked through woods, and sat at night beside a campfire. Although he had through the memories learned about the pain of loss and loneliness, now he gained, too, an understanding of solitude and its joy.

'What is your favourite?' Jonas asked the Giver. 'You don't have to give it away yet,' he added quickly. 'Just tell me about it, so I can look forward to it, because I'll have to receive it when your job is done.'

The Giver smiled. 'Lie down,' he said. 'I'm happy to give it to you.'

Jonas felt the joy of it as soon as the memory began.

Sometimes it took a while for him to get his bearings, to find his place. But this time he fitted right in and felt the happiness that pervaded the memory.

He was in a room filled with people, and it was warm, with firelight glowing on a hearth. He could see through a window that outside it was night, and snowing. There were coloured lights: red and green and yellow, twinkling from a tree which was, oddly, inside the room. On a table, lighted candles stood in a polished golden holder and cast a soft, flickering glow. He could smell things cooking, and he heard soft laughter. A golden-haired dog lay sleeping on the floor.

On the floor there were packages wrapped in brightly coloured paper and tied with gleaming ribbons. As Jonas watched, a small child began to pick up the packages and pass them around the room: to other children, to adults who were obviously parents, and to an older, quiet couple, man and woman, who sat smiling together on a couch.

While Jonas watched, the people began one by one to untie the ribbons on the packages, to unwrap the bright papers, open the boxes and reveal toys and clothing and books. There were cries of delight. They hugged one another.

The small child went and sat on the lap of the old woman, and she rocked him and rubbed her cheek against his.

Jonas opened his eyes and lay contentedly on the bed, still luxuriating in the warm and comforting memory. It had all been there, all the things he had learned to treasure.

‘What did you perceive?’ the Giver asked.

‘Warmth,’ Jonas replied, ‘and happiness. And – let me think. *Family*. That it was a celebration of some sort, a holiday. And something else – I can’t quite get the word for it.’

‘It will come to you.’

‘Who were the old people? Why were they there?’ It had puzzled Jonas, seeing them in the room. The Old of the community did not ever leave their special place, the House of the Old, where they were so well cared for and respected.

‘They were called Grandparents.’

‘Grand parents?’

‘Grandparents. It meant parents-of-the-parents, long ago.’

‘Back and back and back?’ Jonas began to laugh. ‘So actually, there could be parents-of-the-parents-of-the-parents-of-the-parents?’

The Giver laughed, too. ‘That’s right. It’s a little like looking at yourself looking in a mirror looking at yourself looking in a mirror.’

Jonas frowned. ‘But my parents must have had parents!’

I never thought about it before. Who are my parents-of-the-parents? *Where* are they?’

‘You could go and look in the Hall of Open Records. You’d find the names. But think, son. If you apply for children, then who will be their parents-of-the-parents? Who will be their grandparents?’

‘My mother and father, of course.’

‘And where will they be?’

Jonas thought. ‘Oh,’ he said slowly. ‘When I finish my training and become a full adult, I’ll be given my own dwelling. And then when Lily does, a few years later, she’ll get *her* own dwelling, and maybe a spouse, and children if she applies for them, and then Mother and Father—’

‘That’s right.’

‘As long as they’re still working and contributing to the community, they’ll go and live with the other Childless Adults. And they won’t be part of my life any more.

‘And after that, when the time comes, they’ll go to the House of the Old,’ Jonas went on. He was thinking aloud. ‘And they’ll be well cared for, and respected, and when they’re released, there will be a celebration.’

‘Which you won’t attend,’ the Giver pointed out.

‘No, of course not, because I won’t even know about it. By then I’ll be so busy with my own life. And Lily will,

too. So our children, if we have them, won't know who their parent-of-parents are, either.

'It seems to work pretty well that way, doesn't it? The way we do it in our community?' Jonas asked. 'I just didn't realise there was any other way, until I received that memory.'

'It works,' the Giver agreed.

Jonas hesitated. 'I certainly liked the memory, though. I can see why it's your favourite. I couldn't quite get the word for the whole feeling of it, the feeling that was so strong in the room.'

'Love,' the Giver told him.

Jonas repeated it. 'Love.' It was a word and concept new to him.

They were both silent for a minute. Then Jonas said, 'Giver?'

'Yes?'

'I feel very foolish saying this. Very, very foolish.'

'No need. Nothing is foolish here. Trust the memories and how they make you feel.'

'Well,' Jonas said, looking at the floor, 'I know you don't have the memory any more, because you gave it to me, so maybe you won't understand this—'

'I will. I am left with a vague wisp of that one; and I have many other memories of families, and holidays, and happiness. Of love.'

Jonas blurted out what he was feeling. 'I was thinking that . . . well, I can see that it wasn't a very practical way to live, with the Old right there in the same place, where maybe they wouldn't be well taken care of, the way they are now, and that we have a better-arranged way of doing things. But anyway, I was thinking, I mean feeling, actually, that it was kind of nice, then. And that I wish we could be that way, and that you could be my grandparent. The family in the memory seemed a little more...' He faltered, not able to find the word he wanted.

'A little more complete,' the Giver suggested.

Jonas nodded. 'I liked the feeling of love,' he confessed. He glanced nervously at the speaker on the wall, reassuring himself that no one was listening. 'I wish we still had that,' he whispered. 'Of course,' he added quickly, 'I do understand that it wouldn't work very well. And that it's much better to be organised the way we are now. I can see that it was a *dangerous* way to live.'

'What do you mean?'

Jonas hesitated. He wasn't certain, really, what he had meant. He could feel that there was *risk* involved, though he wasn't sure how. 'Well,' he said finally, grasping for an explanation, 'they had *fire* right there in that room. There was a fire burning in the fireplace. And there were candles

on a table. I can certainly see why those things were outlawed.

'Still,' he said slowly, almost to himself, 'I did like the light they made. And the warmth.'

'Father? Mother?' Jonas asked tentatively after the evening meal. 'I have a question I want to ask you.'

'What is it, Jonas?' his father asked.

He made himself say the words, though he felt flushed with embarrassment. He had rehearsed them in his mind all the way home from the Annex.

'Do you love me?'

There was an awkward silence for a moment. Then Father gave a little chuckle. 'Jonas. You, of all people. Precision of language, *please!*'

'What do you mean?' Jonas asked. Amusement was not at all what he had anticipated.

'Your father means that you used a very generalised word, so meaningless that it's become almost obsolete,' his mother explained carefully.

Jonas stared at them. Meaningless? He had never before felt anything as meaningful as the memory.

'And of course our community can't function smoothly if people don't use precise language. You could ask, "Do you enjoy me?" The answer is "Yes",' his mother said.

'Or,' his father suggested, 'Do you take pride in my accomplishments?' And the answer is wholeheartedly "Yes".'

'Do you understand why it's inappropriate to use a word like "love"?' Mother asked.

Jonas nodded. 'Yes, thank you, I do,' he replied slowly.

It was his first lie to his parents.

'Gabriel?' Jonas whispered that night to the newchild. The crib was in his room again. After Gabe had slept soundly in Jonas's room for four nights, his parents had pronounced the experiment a success and Jonas a hero. Gabriel was growing rapidly, now crawling and giggling across the room and pulling himself up to stand. He could be upgraded in the Nurturing Centre, Father said happily, now that he slept; he could be officially named and given to his family in December, which was only two months away.

But when he was taken away, he stopped sleeping again, and cried in the night.

So he was back in Jonas's sleepingroom. They would give it a little more time, they decided. Since Gabe seemed to like it in Jonas's room, he would sleep there at night a little longer, until the habit of sound sleep was fully formed. The Nurturers were very optimistic about Gabriel's future.

THE GIVER

There was no answer to Jonas's whisper. Gabriel was sound asleep.

'Things could change, Gabe,' Jonas went on. 'Things could be different. I don't know how, but there must be some way for things to be different. There could be colours.

'And grandparents,' he added, staring through the dimness towards the ceiling of his sleepingroom. 'And everybody would have the memories.

'You know about memories,' he whispered, turning towards the crib.

Gabriel's breathing was even and deep. Jonas liked having him there, though he felt guilty about the secret. Each night he gave memories to Gabriel: memories of boat rides and picnics in the sun; memories of soft rainfall against windowpanes; memories of dancing barefoot on a
up lawn.

Gabe?

The newchild stirred slightly in his sleep. Jonas looked over at him.

'There could be love,' Jonas whispered.

The next morning, for the first time, Jonas did not take his pill. Something within him, something that had grown there through the memories, told him to throw the pill away.



Today is declared an unscheduled holiday. Jonas, his parents and Lily all turned in surprise and looked at the wall speaker from which the announcement had come. It happened so rarely, and was such a treat for the entire community when it did. Adults were exempted from the day's work, children from school and training and volunteer hours. The substitute Labourers, who would be given a different holiday, took over all the necessary tasks: nurturing, food delivery and care of the Old; and the community was free.

Jonas cheered, and put his homework folder down. He had been about to leave for school. School was less important to him now; and before much more time passed, his formal schooling would end. But still, for Twelves, though they had begun their adult training, there were the

endless lists of rules to be memorised and the newest technology to be mastered.

He wished his parents, sister and Gabe a happy day, and rode down the bicycle path, looking for Asher.

He had not taken the pills, now, for four weeks. The Stirrings had returned, and he felt a little guilty and embarrassed about the pleasurable dreams that came to him as he slept. But he knew he couldn't go back to the world of no feelings that he had lived in so long.

And his new, heightened feelings permeated a greater realm than simply his sleep. Though he knew that his failure to take the pills accounted for some of it, he thought that the feelings came also from the memories. Now he could see all of the colours; and he could *keep* them, too, so that the trees and grass and bushes stayed green in his mind. Gabriel's rosy cheeks stayed pink, even when he was asleep. And apples were always, always red.

Now, through the memories, he had seen oceans and mountain lakes and streams that gurgled through woods; and now he saw the familiar wide river beside the path differently. He saw all of the light and colour and history it contained and carried in its slow-moving water; and he knew that there was an Elsewhere from which it came, and an Elsewhere to which it was going.

On this unexpected, casual holiday he felt happy, as he always had on holidays; but with a deeper happiness than ever before. Thinking, as he always did, about precision of language, Jonas realised that it was a new *depth* of feelings that he was experiencing. Somehow they were not at all the same as the feelings that every evening, in every dwelling, every citizen analysed with endless talk.

'I felt angry because someone broke the play area rules,' Lily had said once, making a fist with her small hand to indicate her fury. Her family – Jonas among them – had talked about the possible reasons for rule-breaking, and the need for understanding and patience, until Lily's fist had relaxed and her anger was gone.

But Lily had not felt anger, Jonas realised now. Shallow impatience and exasperation, that was all Lily had felt. He knew that with certainty because now he knew what anger was. Now he had, in the memories, experienced injustice and cruelty, and he had reacted with rage that welled up so passionately inside him that the thought of discussing it calmly at the evening meal was unthinkable.

'I felt sad today,' he had heard his mother say, and they had comforted her.

But now Jonas had experienced real sadness. He had felt grief. He knew that there was no quick comfort for emotions like those.

These were deeper and they did not need to be told. They were *felt*.

Today, he felt happiness.

'Asher!' He spied his friend's bicycle leaning against a tree at the edge of the playing field. Nearby, other bikes were strewn about on the ground. On a holiday the usual rules of order could be disregarded.

He skidded to a stop and dropped his own bike beside the others. 'Hey, Ash!' he shouted, looking around. There seemed to be no one in the play area. 'Where are you?'

'Psssheeewwww!' A child's voice, coming from behind a nearby bush, made the sound. 'Pow! Pow! Pow!'

A female Eleven named Tanya staggered forward from where she had been hiding. Dramatically she clutched her stomach and stumbled about in a zig-zag pattern, groaning. 'You got me!' she called, and fell to the ground, lying on her back.

'Blam!'

Jonas, standing on the side of the playing field, recognised Asher's voice. He saw his friend, aiming an imaginary weapon in his hand, dart from behind one tree to another. 'Blam! You're in my line of ambush, Jonas! Watch out!'

Jonas stepped back. He moved behind Asher's bike and knelt so that he was out of sight. It was a game he had

often played with the other children, a game of good guys and bad guys, a harmless pastime that used up their contained energy and ended only when they all lay posed in freakish postures on the ground.

He had never recognised it before as a game of war.

'Attack!' The shout came from behind the small storehouse where play equipment was kept. Three children dashed forward, their imaginary weapons in firing position.

From the opposite side of the field came an opposing shout: 'Counter-attack!' From their hiding places a horde of children – Jonas recognised Fiona in the group – emerged, running in a crouched position, firing across the field. Several of them stopped, grabbed their own shoulders and chests with exaggerated gestures, and pretended to be hit. They dropped to the ground and lay suppressing giggles.

Feelings surged within Jonas. He found himself walking forward into the field.

'You're hit, Jonas!' Asher yelled from behind the tree. 'Pow! You're hit again!'

Jonas stood alone in the centre of the field. Several of the children raised their heads and looked at him uneasily. The attacking armies slowed, emerged from their crouched positions, and watched to see what he was doing.

In his mind, Jonas saw again the face of the boy who had lain dying on a field and had begged him for water. He had a sudden choking feeling, as if it were difficult to breathe.

One of the children raised an imaginary rifle and made an attempt to destroy him with a firing noise. 'Pssheew!' Then they were all silent, standing awkwardly, and the only sound was the sound of Jonas's shuddering breaths. He was struggling not to cry.

Gradually, when nothing happened, nothing changed, the children looked at each other nervously and went away. He heard the sounds as they righted their bicycles and began to ride down the path that led from the field.

Only Asher and Fiona remained.

'What's wrong, Jonas? It was only a game,' Fiona said.

'You ruined it,' Asher said in an irritated voice.

'Don't play it any more,' Jonas pleaded.

'I'm the one who's training for Assistant Recreation Director,' Asher pointed out angrily. 'Games aren't *your* area of expertness.'

'Expertise,' Jonas corrected him automatically.

'Whatever. You can't say what we play, even if you *are* going to be the new Receiver.' Asher looked warily at him. 'I apologise for not paying you the respect you deserve,' he mumbled.

'Asher,' Jonas said. He was trying to speak carefully, and with kindness, to say exactly what he wanted to say. 'You had no way of knowing this. I didn't know it myself until recently. But it's a cruel game. In the past, there have—'

'I said I *apologise*, Jonas.'

Jonas sighed. It was no use. Of course Asher couldn't understand. 'I accept your apology, Asher,' he said wearily.

'Do you want to go for a ride along the river, Jonas?' Fiona asked, biting her lip with nervousness.

Jonas looked at her. She was so lovely. For a fleeting instant he thought he would like nothing better than to ride peacefully along the river path, laughing and talking with his gentle female friend. But he knew that such times had been taken from him now. He shook his head. After a moment his two friends turned and went to their bikes. He watched as they rode away.

Jonas trudged to the bench beside the Storehouse and sat down, overwhelmed with feelings of loss. His childhood, his friendships, his carefree sense of security – all of these things seemed to be slipping away. With his new, heightened feelings, he was overwhelmed by sadness at the way the others had laughed and shouted, playing at war. But he knew that they could not understand why, without the memories. He felt such

love for Asher and for Fiona. But they could not feel it back, without the memories. And he could not give them those. Jonas knew with certainty that he could change nothing.

Back in their dwelling, that evening, Lily chattered merrily about the wonderful holiday she had had, playing with her friends, having her midday meal out of doors, and (she confessed) sneaking a very short try on her father's bicycle.

'I can't wait till I get my very own bicycle next month. Father's is too big for me. I fell,' she explained matter-of-factly. 'Good thing Gabe wasn't in the child seat!'

'A very good thing,' Mother agreed, frowning at the idea of it. Gabriel waved his arms at the mention of himself. He had begun to walk just the week before. The first steps of a newchild were always the occasion for celebration at the Nurturing Centre, Father said, but also for the introduction of a discipline wand. Now Father brought the slender instrument home with him each night, in case Gabriel misbehaved.

But he was a happy and easygoing toddler. Now he moved unsteadily across the room, laughing. 'Gay!' he chirped. 'Gay!' It was the way he said his own name.

Jonas brightened. It had been a depressing day for him,

after such a bright start. But he set his glum thoughts aside. He thought about starting to teach Lily to ride so that she could speed off proudly after her Ceremony of Nine, which would be coming soon. It was hard to believe that it was almost December again, that almost a year had passed since he had become a Twelve.

He smiled as he watched the newchild plant one small foot carefully before the other, grinning with glee at his own steps as he tried them out.

'I want to get to sleep early tonight,' Father said. 'Tomorrow's a busy day for me. The twins are being born tomorrow, and the test results show that they're identical.'

'One for here, one for Elsewhere,' Lily chanted. 'One for here, one for Else—'

'Do you actually *take* it Elsewhere, Father?' Jonas asked.

'No, I just have to make the selection. I weigh them, hand the larger over to a Nurturer who's standing by, waiting, and then I get the smaller one all cleaned up and comfy. Then I perform a small Ceremony of Release and...' He glanced down, grinning at Gabriel. 'Then I wave bye-bye,' he said, in the special sweet voice he used when he spoke to the newchild. He waved his hand in the familiar gesture.

Gabriel giggled and waved bye-bye back to him.

'And somebody else comes to get him? Somebody from Elsewhere?'

'That's right, Jonas-bonus.'

Jonas rolled his eyes in embarrassment that his father had used the silly pet name.

Lily was deep in thought. 'What if they give the little twin a name Elsewhere, a name like, oh, maybe Jonathan? And here, in our community, at his naming, the twin that we kept here is given the name Jonathan, and then there would be two children with the same name, and they would *look* exactly the same, and someday, maybe when they were a Six, one group of Sixes would go to visit another community on a bus, and there in the other community, in the *other* group of Sixes, would be a Jonathan who was exactly the same as the *other* Jonathan, and then maybe they would get mixed up and take the wrong Jonathan home, and maybe his parents wouldn't notice, and then—'

She paused for breath.

'Lily,' Mother said, 'I have a wonderful idea. Maybe when you become a Twelve, they'll give you the Assignment of Storyteller! I don't think we've had a Storyteller in the community for a long time. But if I were on the Committee, I would definitely choose you for that job!'

Lily grinned. 'I have a *better* idea for one more story,'

she announced. 'What if actually we were *all* twins and didn't know it, and so Elsewhere there would be another Lily, and another Jonas, and another Father, and another Asher, and another Chief Elder, and another—'

Father groaned. 'Lily,' he said. 'It's bedtime.'



'Giver,' Jonas asked the next afternoon, 'do you ever think about release?'

'Do you mean my own release, or just the general topic of release?'

'Both, I guess. I apologize— I mean I should have been more precise. But I don't know exactly what I meant.'

'Sit back up. No need to lie down while we're talking.' Jonas, who had already been stretched out on the bed when the question came to his mind, sat back up.

'I guess I do think about it occasionally,' the Giver said. 'I think about my own release when I'm in an awful lot of pain. I wish I could put in a request for it, sometimes. But I'm not permitted to do that until the new Receiver is trained.'

'Me,' Jonas said in a dejected voice. He was not looking forward to the end of the training, when he would become

the new Receiver. It was clear to him what a terribly difficult and lonely life it was, despite the honour.

'I can't request release either,' Jonas pointed out. 'It was in my rules.'

The Giver laughed harshly. 'I know that. They hammered out those rules after the failure ten years ago.'

Jonas had heard again and again now, reference to the previous failure. But he still did not know what had happened ten years before. 'Giver,' he said, 'tell me what happened. Please.'

The Giver shrugged. 'On the surface, it was quite simple. A Receiver-to-be was selected, the way you were. The selection went smoothly enough. The Ceremony was held, and the selection was made. The crowd cheered, as they did for you. The new Receiver was puzzled and a little frightened, as you were.'

'My parents told me it was a female.'

The Giver nodded.

Jonas thought of his favourite female, Fiona, and shivered. He wouldn't want his gentle friend to suffer the way he had, taking on the memories. 'What was she like?' he asked the Giver.

The Giver looked sad, thinking about it. 'She was a remarkable young woman. Very self-possessed and serene.

Intelligent, eager to learn.' He shook his head and drew a deep breath. 'You know, Jonas, when she came to me in this room, when she presented herself to begin her training—'

Jonas interrupted him with a question. 'Can you tell me her name? My parents said that it wasn't to be spoken again in the community. But couldn't you say it just to me?'

The Giver hesitated painfully, as if saying the name aloud might be excruciating. 'Her name was Rosemary,' he told Jonas, finally.

'Rosemary. I like that name.'

The Giver went on. 'When she came to me for the first time, she sat there in the chair where you sat on your first day. She was eager and excited and a little scared. We talked. I tried to explain things as well as I could.'

'The way you did to me.'

The Giver chuckled ruefully. 'The explanations are difficult. The whole thing is so beyond one's experience. But I tried. And she listened carefully. Her eyes were very luminous, I remember.'

He looked up suddenly. 'Jonas, I gave you a memory that I told you was my favourite. I still have a shred of it left. The room, with the family, and grandparents?'

Jonas nodded. Of course he remembered. 'Yes,' he said. 'It had that wonderful feeling with it. You told me it was love.'

'You can understand, then, that that's what I felt for Rosemary,' the Giver explained. 'I loved her.'

'I feel it for you, too,' he added.

'What happened to her?' Jonas asked.

'Her training began. She received well, as you do. She was so enthusiastic. So delighted to experience new things. I remember her laughter ...'

His voice faltered and trailed off.

'What happened?' Jonas asked again, after a moment. 'Please tell me.'

The Giver closed his eyes. 'It broke my heart, Jonas, to transfer pain to her. But it was my job. It was what I had to do, the way I've had to do it to you.'

The room was silent. Jonas waited. Finally the Giver continued.

'Five weeks. That was all. I gave her happy memories: a ride on a merry-go-round; a kitten to play with; a picnic. Sometimes I chose one just because I knew it would make her laugh, and I so treasured the sound of that laughter in this room that had always been so silent.'

'But she was like you, Jonas. She wanted to experience

everything. She knew that it was her responsibility. And so she asked me for more difficult memories.'

Jonas held his breath for a moment. 'You didn't give her *war*, did you? Not after just five weeks?'

The Giver shook his head and sighed. 'No. And I didn't give her physical pain. But I gave her loneliness. And I gave her loss. I transferred a memory of a child taken from its parents. That was the first one. She appeared stunned at its end.'

Jonas swallowed. Rosemary, and her laughter, had begun to seem real to him, and he pictured her looking up from the bed of memories, shocked.

The Giver continued. 'I backed off, gave her more little delights. But everything changed, once she knew about *sin*. I could see it in her eyes.'

'She wasn't brave enough?' Jonas suggested.

The Giver didn't respond to the question. 'She insisted that I continue, that I not spare her. She said it was her duty. And I knew, of course, that she was correct.

'I couldn't bring myself to inflict physical pain on her. But I gave her anguish of many kinds. Poverty, and hunger, and terror.

'I *had* to, Jonas. It was my job. And she had been chosen.' The Giver looked at him imploringly. Jonas stroked his hand.

'Finally one afternoon, we finished for the day. It had been a hard session. I tried to finish – as I do with you – by transferring something happy and cheerful. But the times of laughter were gone by then. She stood up very silently, frowning, as if she were making a decision. Then she came over to me and put her arms around me. She kissed my cheek.' As Jonas watched, the Giver stroked his own cheek, recalling the touch of Rosemary's lips ten years before.

'She left here that day, left this room, and did not go back to her dwelling. I was notified by the Speaker that she had gone directly to the Chief Elder and asked to be released.'

'But it's against the rules! The Receiver-in-training can't apply for rel—'

'It's in your rules, Jonas. But it wasn't in hers. She asked for release, and they had to give it to her. I never saw her again.'

So that was the failure, Jonas thought. It was obvious that it saddened the Giver very deeply. But it didn't seem such a terrible thing, after all. And he, Jonas, would never have done it – never have requested release, no matter how difficult his training became. The Giver needed a successor, and he had been chosen.

A thought occurred to Jonas. Rosemary had been

released very early in her training. What if something happened to him, Jonas? He had a whole year's worth of memories now.

'Giver,' he asked, 'I can't request release, I know that. But what if something happened: an accident? What if I fell into the river like the little Four, Caleb, did? Well, that doesn't make sense because I'm a good swimmer. But what if I couldn't swim, and fell into the river and was lost? Then there wouldn't be a new Receiver, but you would already have given away an awful lot of important memories, so even though they would select a new Receiver, the memories would be gone except for the shreds that you have left of them? And then what if—'

He started to laugh, suddenly. 'I sound like my sister, Emily,' he said, amused at himself.

The Giver looked at him gravely. 'You just stay away from the river, my friend,' he said. 'The community lost Rosemary after five weeks and it was a disaster for them. I don't know *what* the community would do if they lost you.'

'Why was it a disaster?'

'I think I mentioned to you once,' the Giver reminded him, 'that when she was gone, the memories came back to the people. If you were to be lost in the river, Jonas, your

memories would not be lost with you. Memories are *forever*.

'Rosemary had only those five weeks' worth, and most of them were good ones. But there were those few terrible memories, the ones that had overwhelmed her. For a while they overwhelmed the community. All those *feelings*! They'd never experienced that before.

'I was so devastated by my own grief at her loss, and my own feeling of failure, that I didn't even try to help them through it. I was angry, too.'

The Giver was quiet for a moment, obviously thinking. 'You know,' he said, finally, 'if they lost *you*, with all the training you've had now, they'd have all those memories again themselves.'

Jonas made a face. 'They'd hate that.'

'They certainly would. They wouldn't know how to deal with it at all.'

'The only way *I* deal with it is by having you there to help me,' Jonas pointed out with a sigh.

The Giver nodded. 'I suppose,' he said slowly, 'that I could...'

'You could what?'

The Giver was still deep in thought. After a moment, he said, 'If you floated off in the river, I suppose I could help the whole community the way I've helped you. It's an

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interesting concept. I need to think about it some more. Maybe we'll talk about it again sometime. But not now.

'I'm glad you're a good swimmer, Jonas. But stay away from the river.' He laughed a little, but the laughter was not lighthearted. His thoughts seemed to be elsewhere, and his eyes were very troubled.



Jonas glanced at the clock. There was so much work to be done, always, that he and the Giver seldom simply sat and talked, the way they just had.

'I'm sorry that I wasted so much time with my questions,' Jonas said. 'I was only asking about release because my father is releasing a newchild today. A twin. He has to select one and release the other one. They do it by weight.' Jonas glanced at the clock. 'Actually, I suppose he's already finished. I think it was this morning.'

The Giver's face took on a solemn look. 'I wish they wouldn't do that,' he said quietly, almost to himself.

'Well, they can't have two identical people around! Think how confusing it would be!' Jonas chuckled.

'I wish I could watch,' he added, as an afterthought. He liked the thought of seeing his father perform the

ceremony, and making the little twin clean and comfy. His father was such a gentle man.

'You can watch,' the Giver said.

'No,' Jonas told him. 'They never let children watch. It's very private.'

'Jonas,' the Giver told him, 'I know that you read your training instructions very carefully. Don't you remember that you are allowed to ask anyone anything?'

Jonas nodded. 'Yes, but—'

'Jonas, when you and I have finished our time together, you will be the new Receiver. You can read the books; you'll have the memories. You have access to *everything*. It's part of your training. If you want to watch a release, you have simply to ask.'

Jonas shrugged. 'Well, maybe I will, then. But it's too late for this one. I'm sure it was this morning.'

The Giver told him, then, something he had not known. 'All private ceremonies are recorded. They're in the Hall of Closed Records. *Do you want to see this morning's release?*'

Jonas hesitated. He was afraid that his father wouldn't like it, if he watched something so private.

'I think you should,' the Giver told him firmly.

'All right, then,' Jonas said. 'Tell me how.'

The Giver rose from his chair, went to the speaker on the wall, and clicked the switch from OFF to ON.

The voice spoke immediately. 'Yes, Receiver. How may I help you?'

'I would like to see this morning's release of the twin.'

'One moment, Receiver. Thank you for your instructions.'

Jonas watched the video screen above the row of switches. Its blank face began to flicker with zig-zag lines; then some numbers appeared, followed by the date and time. He was astonished and delighted that this was available to him, and surprised that he had not known.

Suddenly he could see a small windowless room, empty except for a bed, a table with some equipment on it – Jonas recognised a scale; he had seen them before, when he'd been doing volunteer hours at the Nurturing Centre – and a cupboard. He could see pale carpeting on the floor.

'It's just an ordinary room,' he commented. 'I thought maybe they'd have it in the Auditorium, so that everybody could come. All the Old go to Ceremonies of Release. But I suppose that when it's just a newborn, they don't—'

'Shhh,' the Giver said, his eyes on the screen.

Jonas's father, wearing his nurturing uniform, entered the room, cradling a tiny newchild wrapped in a soft blanket in his arms. A uniformed woman followed through

the door, carrying a second newchild wrapped in a similar blanket.

'That's my father.' Jonas found himself whispering, as if he might wake the little ones if he spoke aloud. 'And the other Nurturer is his assistant. She's still in training, but she'll be finished soon.'

The two Nurturers unwrapped the blankets and laid the identical newborns on the bed. They were naked. Jonas could see that they were males.

He watched, fascinated, as his father gently lifted one and then the other to the scale and weighed them.

He heard his father laugh. 'Good,' his father said to the woman. 'I thought for a moment that they might both be exactly the same. *Then* we'd have a problem. But this one,' he handed one, after rewrapping it, to his assistant, 'is six pounds even. So you can clean him up and dress him and take him over to the Centre.'

The woman took the newchild and left through the door she had entered.

Jonas watched as his father bent over the squirming newchild on the bed. 'And you, little guy, you're only five pounds ten ounces. A *shrimp*!'

'That's the special voice he uses with Gabriel,' Jonas remarked, smiling.

'Watch,' the Giver said.

'Now he cleans him up and makes him comfy,' Jonas told him. 'He told me.'

'Be quiet, Jonas,' the Giver commanded in a strange voice. '*Watch.*'

Obediently Jonas concentrated on the screen, waiting for what would happen next. He was especially curious about the ceremony part.

His father turned and opened the cupboard. He took out a syringe and a small bottle. Very carefully he inserted the needle into the bottle and began to fill the syringe with a clear liquid.

Jonas winced sympathetically. He had forgotten that newchildren had to get shots. He hated shots himself, though he knew that they were necessary.

To his surprise, his father began very carefully to direct the needle into the top of the newchild's forehead, puncturing the place where the fragile skin pulsed. The newborn squirmed, and wailed faintly.

'Why's he—'

'Shhh,' the Giver said sharply.

His father was talking, and Jonas realised that he was hearing the answer to the question he had started to ask. Still in the special voice, his father was saying, 'I know, I know. It hurts, little guy. But I have to use a vein, and the veins in your arms are still too teeny-weeny.'

He pushed the plunger very slowly, injecting the liquid into the scalp vein until the syringe was empty.

'All done. That wasn't so bad, was it?' Jonas heard his father say cheerfully. He turned aside and dropped the syringe into a waste receptacle.

Now he cleans him up and makes him comfy, Jonas said to himself, aware that the Giver didn't want to talk during the little ceremony.

As he continued to watch, the newchild, no longer crying, moved his arms and legs in a jerking motion. Then he went limp. His head fell to the side, his eyes half open. Then he was still.

With an odd, shocked feeling, Jonas recognised the gestures and posture and expression. They were familiar. He had seen them before. But he couldn't remember where.

Jonas stared at the screen, waiting for something to happen. But nothing did. The little twin lay motionless. His father was putting things away. Folding the blanket. Closing the cupboard.

Once again, as he had on the playing field, he felt the choking sensation. Once again he saw the face of the light-haired, bloodied soldier as life left his eyes. The memory came back.

He killed it! My father killed it! Jonas said to himself,

stunned at what he was realising. He continued to stare at the screen numbly.

His father tidied the room. Then he picked up a small carton that lay waiting on the floor, set it on the bed, and lifted the limp body into it. He placed the lid on tightly.

He picked up the carton and carried it to the other side of the room. He opened a small door in the wall; Jonas could see darkness behind the door. It seemed to be the same sort of chute into which trash was deposited at school.

His father loaded the carton containing the body into the chute and gave it a shove.

'Bye-bye, little guy,' Jonas heard his father say before he left the room. Then the screen went blank.

The Giver turned to him. Quite calmly, he related, 'When the Speaker notified me that Rosemary had applied for release, they turned on the tape to show me the process. There she was – my last glimpse of that beautiful child – waiting. They brought in the syringe and asked her to roll up her sleeve.

'You suggested, Jonas, that perhaps she wasn't brave enough? I don't know about bravery: what it is, what it means. I do know that I sat here numb with horror. Wretched with helplessness. And I listened as Rosemary told them that she would prefer to inject herself.

'Then she did so. I didn't watch. I looked away.'

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The Giver turned to him. 'Well, there you are, Jonas. You were wondering about release,' he said in a bitter voice.

Jonas felt a ripping sensation inside himself, the feeling of terrible pain clawing its way forward to emerge in a cry.



I won't! I won't go home! You can't make me!' Jonas sobbed and shouted and pounded the bed with his fists.

'Sit up, Jonas,' the Giver told him firmly.

Jonas obeyed him. Weeping, shuddering, he sat on the edge of the bed. He would not look at the Giver.

'You may stay here tonight. I want to talk to you. But you must be quiet now, while I notify your family unit. No one must hear you cry.'

Jonas looked up wildly. 'No one heard that little twin cry, either! No one but my father!' He collapsed in sobs again.

The Giver waited silently. Finally Jonas was able to quiet himself and he sat huddled, his shoulders shaking.

The Giver went to the wall speaker and clicked the switch to ON.

'Yes, Receiver. How may I help you?'

'Notify the new Receiver's family unit that he will be staying with me tonight, for additional training.'

'I will take care of that, sir. Thank you for your instructions,' the voice said.

'I will take care of that, sir. I will take care of that, sir,' Jonas mimicked in a cruel, sarcastic voice. 'I will do whatever you like, sir. I will kill people, sir. Old people? Small newborn people? I'd be happy to kill them, sir. Thank you for your instructions, sir. How may I help y—' He couldn't seem to stop.

The Giver grasped his shoulders firmly. Jonas fell silent and stared at him.

'Listen to me, Jonas. They can't help it. *They know nothing.*'

'You said that to me once before.'

'I said it because it's true. It's the way they live. It's the way that was created for them. It's the same life that you would have, if you had not been chosen as my successor.'

'But he *lied* to me!' Jonas wept.

'It's what he was told to do, and he knows nothing else.'

'What about you? Do *you* lie to me, too?' Jonas almost spat the question at the Giver.

'I am empowered to lie. But I have never lied to you.'

Jonas stared at him. 'Release is always like that? For

people who break the rules three times? For the *Old*? Do they kill the Old, too?’

‘Yes, it’s true.’

‘And what about Fiona? She loves the Old! She’s in training to care for them. Does she know yet? What will she do when she finds out? How will she feel?’ Jonas brushed wetness from his face with the back of one hand.

‘Fiona is already being trained in the fine art of release,’ the Giver told him. ‘She’s very efficient at her work, your red-haired friend. Feelings are not part of the life she’s learned.’

Jonas wrapped his arms around himself and rocked his own body back and forth. ‘What should I do? I can’t go back! I can’t!’

The Giver stood up. ‘First, I will order our evening meal. Then we will eat.’

Jonas found himself using the nasty, sarcastic voice again. ‘Then we’ll have a sharing of feelings?’

The Giver gave a rueful, anguished, empty laugh. ‘Jonas, you and I are the only ones who *have* feelings. We’ve been sharing them now for almost a year.’

‘I’m sorry, Giver,’ Jonas said miserably. ‘I don’t mean to be so hateful. Not to you.’

The Giver rubbed Jonas’s hunched shoulders. ‘And after we eat,’ he went on, ‘we’ll make a plan.’

Jonas looked up, puzzled. 'A plan for what? There's nothing. There's nothing we can do. It's always been this way. Before me, before you, before the ones who came before you. Back and back and back.' His voice trailed the familiar phrase.

'Jonas,' the Giver said, after a moment, 'it's true that it has been this way for what seems forever. But the memories tell us that it has not *always* been. People felt things once. You and I have been part of that, so we know. We know that they once felt things like pride, and sorrow, and—'

'And love,' Jonas added, remembering the family scene that had so affected him. 'And pain.' He thought again of the soldier.

'The worst part of holding the memories is not the

It's the loneliness of it. Memories need to be shared.'

'We started to share them with you,' Jonas said, trying to cheer him.

'That's true. And having you here with me over the past year has made me realise that things must change. For years I've felt that they should, but it seemed so hopeless.

'Now for the first time I think there might be a way,' the Giver said slowly. 'And you brought it to my attention, barely...' he glanced at the clock — 'two hours ago.'

Jonas watched him, and listened.

*

It was late at night, now. They had talked and talked. Jonas sat wrapped in a robe belonging to the Giver, the long robe that only Elders wore.

It was possible, what they had planned. Barely possible. If it failed, he would very likely be killed.

But what did that matter? If he stayed, his life was no longer worth living.

'Yes,' he told the Giver. 'I'll do it. I think I can do it. I'll try, anyway. But I want you to come with me.'

The Giver shook his head. 'Jonas,' he said, 'the community has depended, all these generations, back and back and back, on a resident Receiver to hold their memories for them. I've turned over many of them to you in the past year. And I can't take them back. There's no way for me to get them back if I have given them.'

'So if you escape, once you are gone – and, Jonas, you know that you can never return...'

Jonas nodded solemnly. It was the terrifying part. 'Yes,' he said, 'I know. But if you come with me—'

The Giver shook his head and made a gesture to silence him. He continued. 'If you get away, if you get beyond, if you get to Elsewhere, it will mean that the community has to bear the burden themselves, of the memories you had been holding for them.'

'I think that they can, and that they will acquire some

wisdom. But it will be desperately hard for them. When we lost Rosemary ten years ago, and her memories returned to the people, they panicked. And those were such few memories, compared to yours. When your memories return, they'll need help. Remember how I helped you in the beginning, when the receiving of memories was new to you?

Jonas nodded. 'It was scary at first. And it hurt a lot.'

'You needed me then. And now they will.'

'It's no use. They'll find someone to take my place. They'll choose a new Receiver.'

'There's no one ready for training, not right away. Oh, they'll speed up the selection, of course. But I can't think of another child who has the right qualities—'

There's a little female with pale eyes. But she's only

That's correct. I know the one you mean. Her name is Katharine. But she's too young. So they will be *forced* to bear those memories.'

'I want you to come, Giver,' Jonas pleaded.

'No. I have to stay here,' the Giver said firmly. 'I want to, Jonas. If I go with you, and together we take away *all* their protection from the memories, Jonas, the community will be left with no one to help them. They'll be thrown into chaos. They'll destroy themselves. I can't go.'

'Giver,' Jonas suggested, 'you and I don't need to *care* about the rest of them.'

The Giver looked at him with a questioning smile. Jonas hung his head. Of course they needed to care. It was the meaning of everything.

'And in any case, Jonas,' the Giver sighed, 'I wouldn't make it. I'm very weakened now. Do you know that I no longer see colours?'

Jonas's heart broke. He reached for the Giver's hand.

'You have the colours,' the Giver told him. 'And you have the courage. I will help you to have the strength.'

'A year ago,' Jonas reminded him, 'when I had just become a Twelve, when I began to see the first colour, you told me that the beginning had been different for you. But that I wouldn't understand.'

The Giver brightened. 'That's true. And do you know, Jonas, that with all your knowledge now, with all your memories, with all you've learned – *still* you won't understand? Because I've been a little selfish. I haven't given any of it to you. I wanted to keep it for myself to the last.'

'Keep what?'

'When I was just a boy, younger than you, it began to come to me. But it wasn't the seeing-beyond for me. It was different. For me, it was *hearing*-beyond.'

Jonas frowned, trying to figure that out. 'What did you hear?' he asked.

'Music,' the Giver said, smiling. 'I began to hear something truly remarkable, and it is called music. I'll give you some before I go.'

Jonas shook his head emphatically. 'No, Giver,' he said. 'I want you to keep that, to have with you, when I'm gone.'

Jonas went home the next morning, cheerfully greeted his parents, and lied easily about what a busy, pleasant night he had had.

His father smiled and lied easily, too, about his busy and pleasant day the day before.

Throughout the school day, as he did his lessons, Jonas went over the plan in his head. It seemed startlingly simple. Jonas and the Giver had gone over it and over it, late into the night hours.

For the next two weeks, as the time for the December Ceremony approached, the Giver would transfer every memory of courage and strength that he could to Jonas. He would need those to help him find the Elsewhere that they were both sure existed. They knew it would be a very difficult journey.

Then, in the middle of the night before the Ceremony, Jonas would secretly leave his dwelling. This was probably

the most dangerous part, because it was a violation of a major rule for any citizen not on official business to leave a dwelling at night.

'I'll leave at midnight,' Jonas said. 'The Food Collectors will be finished picking up the evening-meal remains by then, and the Path-Maintenance Crews don't start their work that early. So there won't be anyone to see me, unless of course someone is out on emergency business.'

'I don't know what you should do if you are seen, Jonas,' the Giver had said. 'I have memories, of course, of all kinds of escapes. People fleeing from terrible things throughout history. But every situation is individual. There is no memory of one like this.'

'I'll be careful,' Jonas said. 'No one will see me.'

'As Receiver-in-training, you're held in very high respect already. So I think you wouldn't be questioned very forcefully.'

'I'd just say I was on some important errand for the Receiver. I'd say it was all your fault that I was out after hours,' Jonas teased.

They both laughed a little nervously. But Jonas was certain that he could slip away, unseen, from his house, carrying an extra set of clothing. Silently he would take his bicycle to the riverbank and leave it there hidden in bushes with the clothing folded beside it.

Then he would make his way through the darkness, on foot, silently, to the Annex.

'There's no night-time attendant,' the Giver explained. 'I'll leave the door unlocked. You simply slip into the room. I'll be waiting for you.'

His parents would discover, when they woke, that he was gone. They would also find a cheerful note from Jonas on his bed, telling them that he was going for an early morning ride along the river; that he would be back for the Ceremony.

His parents would be irritated but not alarmed. They would think him inconsiderate and they would plan to chastise him, later.

They would wait, with mounting anger, for him; finally they would be forced to go, taking Lily to the Ceremony without him.

'They won't say anything to anyone, though,' Jonas said, quite certain. 'They won't call attention to my rudeness because it would reflect on their parenting. And anyway, everyone is so involved in the Ceremony that they probably won't notice that I'm not there. Now that I'm a Twelve and in training, I don't have to sit with my age group any more. So Asher will think I'm with my parents, or with you...'

'And your parents will assume you're with Asher, or with me...'

Jonas shrugged. 'It will take everyone a while to realise that I'm not there at all.'

'And you and I will be long on our way by then.'

In the early morning, the Giver would order a vehicle and driver from the Speaker. He visited the other communities frequently, meeting with their Elders; his responsibilities extended over all the surrounding areas. So this would not be an unusual undertaking.

Ordinarily the Giver did not attend the December Ceremony. Last year he had been present because of the occasion of Jonas's selection, in which he was so involved. But his life was usually quite separate from that of the community. No one would comment on his absence, or on the fact that he had chosen this day to be away.

When the driver and vehicle arrived, the Giver would send the driver on some brief errand. During his absence, the Giver would help Jonas hide in the storage area of the vehicle. He would have with him a bundle of food which the Giver would save from his own meals during the next two weeks.

The Ceremony would begin, with all the community there, and by then Jonas and the Giver would be on their way.

By midday Jonas's absence would become apparent,

and would be a cause for serious concern. The Ceremony would not be disrupted – such a disruption would be unthinkable. But searchers would be sent out into the community.

By the time his bicycle and clothing were found, the Giver would be returning. Jonas, by then, would be on his own, making his journey Elsewhere.

The Giver, on his return, would find the community in a state of confusion and panic. Confronted by a situation which they had never faced before, and having no memories from which to find either solace or wisdom, they would not know what to do and would seek his advice.

He would go to the Auditorium where the people would be gathered, still. He would stride to the stage and command their attention.

He would make the solemn announcement that Jonas had been lost in the river. He would immediately begin the Ceremony of Loss.

'Jonas, Jonas,' they would say loudly, as they had once said the name of Caleb. The Giver would lead the chant. Together they would let Jonas's presence in their lives fade away as they said his name in unison more slowly, softer and softer, until he was disappearing from them, until he was no more than an occasional murmur and then, by the

end of the long day, gone forever, not to be mentioned again.

Their attention would turn to the overwhelming task of bearing the memories themselves. The Giver would help them.

'Yes, I understand that they'll need you,' Jonas had said at the end of the lengthy discussion and planning. 'But I'll need you, too. Please come with me.' He knew the answer even as he made the final plea.

'My work will be finished,' the Giver had replied gently, 'when I have helped the community to change and become whole.

'I'm grateful to you, Jonas, because without you I would never have figured out a way to bring about the change. But your role now is to escape. And my role is to stay.'

'But don't you *want* to be with me, Giver?' Jonas asked sadly.

The Giver hugged him. 'I love you, Jonas,' he said. 'But I have another place to go. When my work here is finished, I want to be with my daughter.'

Jonas had been staring glumly at the floor. Now he looked up, startled. 'I didn't know you had a daughter, Giver! You told me that you'd had a spouse. But I never knew about your daughter.'

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The Giver smiled, and nodded. For the first time in their long months together, Jonas saw him look truly happy.

'Her name was Rosemary,' the Giver said.





It would work. They could make it work, Jonas told himself again and again throughout the day.

But that evening everything changed. All of it – all the things they had thought through so meticulously – fell apart.

That night, Jonas was forced to flee. He left the dwelling shortly after the sky became dark and the community still. It was terribly dangerous because some of the work crews were still about, but he moved stealthily and silently, staying in the shadows, making his way past the darkened dwellings and the empty Central Plaza, towards the river. Beyond the Plaza he could see the House of the Old, with the Annexe behind it, outlined against the night sky. But he could not stop there. There was no time. Every minute counted now, and every minute must take him farther from the community.

Now he was on the bridge, hunched over on the bicycle,

pedalling steadily. He could see the dark, churning water far below.

He felt, surprisingly, no fear, nor any regret at leaving the community behind. But he felt a very deep sadness that he had left his closest friend behind. He knew that in the danger of his escape he must be absolutely silent; but with his heart and mind, he called back and hoped that with his capacity for hearing-beyond, the Giver would know that Jonas had said goodbye.

It had happened at the evening meal. The family unit was eating together as always: Lily chattering away, Mother and Father making their customary comments (and lies, Jonas knew) about the day. Nearby, Gabriel played happily on the floor, babbling his baby talk, looking with glee now and then towards Jonas, obviously delighted to have him back after the unexpected night away from the dwelling.

Father glanced down towards the toddler. 'Enjoy it, little guy,' he said. 'This is your last night as visitor.'

'What do you mean?' Jonas asked him.

Father sighed with disappointment. 'Well, you know he wasn't here when you got home this morning because we had him stay overnight at the Nurturing Centre. It seemed like a good opportunity, with you gone, to give it a try. He'd been sleeping so soundly.'

'Didn't it go well?' Mother asked sympathetically.

Father gave a rueful laugh. 'That's an understatement. It was a disaster. He cried all night, apparently. The night crew couldn't handle it. They were *really* frazzled by the time I got to work.'

'Gabe, you naughty thing,' Lily said, with a scolding little cluck towards the grinning toddler on the floor.

'So,' Father went on, 'we obviously had to make the decision. Even *I* voted for Gabriel's release when we had the meeting this afternoon.'

Jonas put down his fork and stared at his father. 'Release?' he asked.

Father nodded. 'We certainly gave it our best try, didn't we?'

'Yes, we did,' Mother agreed emphatically.

Lily nodded in agreement, too.

Jonas worked at keeping his voice absolutely calm. 'When?' he asked. 'When will he be released?'

'First thing tomorrow morning. We have to start our preparations for the Naming Ceremony, so we thought we'd get this taken care of right away.

'It's bye-bye to you, Gabe, in the morning,' Father had said, in his sweet, sing-song voice.

Jonas reached the opposite side of the river, stopped briefly, and looked back. The community where his entire life had been lived lay behind him now, sleeping. At dawn, the orderly, disciplined life he had always known would continue again, without him. The life where nothing was ever unexpected. Or inconvenient. Or unusual. The life without colour, pain or past.

He pushed firmly again at the pedal with his foot and continued riding along the road. It was not safe to spend time looking back. He thought of the rules he had broken so far: enough that if he were caught, now, he would be condemned.

First, he had left the dwelling at night. A major transgression.

Second, he had robbed the community of food: a very serious crime, even though what he had taken was leftovers, set out on the dwelling doorsteps for collection.

Third, he had stolen his father's bicycle. He had hesitated for a moment, standing beside the bikeport in the darkness, not wanting anything of his father's and uncertain, as well, whether he could comfortably ride the larger bike when he was so accustomed to his own.

But it was necessary because it had the child seat attached to the back.

And he had taken Gabriel, too.

*

He could feel the little head nudge his back, bouncing gently against him as he rode. Gabriel was sleeping soundly, strapped into the seat. Before he had left the dwelling, he had laid his hands firmly on Gabe's back and transmitted to him the most soothing memory he could: a slow-swinging hammock under palm trees on an island somewhere, at evening, with a rhythmic sound of languid water lapping hypnotically against a beach nearby. As the memory seeped from him into the newchild, he could feel Gabe's sleep ease and deepen. There had been no stir at all when Jonas lifted him from the crib and placed him gently into the moulded seat.

He knew that he had the remaining hours of night before they would be aware of his escape. So he rode hard, steadily, willing himself not to tire as the minutes and miles passed. There had been no time to receive the memories he and the Giver had counted on, of strength and courage. So he relied on what he had, and hoped it would be enough.

He circled the outlying communities, their dwellings dark. Gradually the distances between communities widened, with longer stretches of empty road. His legs ached at first; then, as time passed, they became numb.

At dawn Gabriel began to stir. They were in an isolated place; fields on either side of the road were dotted with

thickets of trees here and there. He saw a stream, and made his way to it across a rutted, bumpy meadow; Gabriel, wide awake now, giggled as the bicycle jolted him up and down.

Jonas unstrapped Gabe, lifted him from the bike, and watched him investigate the grass and twigs with delight. Carefully he hid the bicycle in thick bushes.

'Morning meal, Gabe!' He unwrapped some of the food and fed them both. Then he filled the cup he had brought with water from the stream and held it for Gabriel to drink. He drank thirstily himself, and sat by the stream, watching the newchild play.

He was exhausted. He knew he must sleep, resting his own muscles and preparing himself for more hours on the bicycle. It would not be safe to travel in daylight.

They would be looking for him soon.

He found a place deeply hidden in the trees, took the newchild there, and lay down, holding Gabriel in his arms. He struggled cheerfully as if it were a wrestling game, the kind they had played back in the dwelling, with tickles and laughter.

'Sorry, Gabe,' Jonas told him. 'I know it's morning, and I know you've just woken up. But we have to sleep now.'

He cuddled the small body close to him, and rubbed the little back. He murmured to Gabriel soothingly. Then he pressed his hands firmly and transmitted a memory of

deep, contented exhaustion. Gabriel's head nodded, after a moment, and fell against Jonas's chest.

Together the fugitives slept through the first dangerous day.

The most terrifying thing was the planes. By now, days had passed; Jonas no longer knew how many. The journey had become automatic: the sleep by days, hidden in underbrush and trees; the finding of water; the careful division of scraps of food, augmented by what he could find in the fields. And the endless, endless miles on the bicycle by night.

His leg muscles were taut now. They ached when he settled himself to sleep. But they were stronger, and he stopped now less often to rest. Sometimes he paused and lifted Gabriel down for a brief bit of exercise, running down the road or through a field together in the dark. But always, when he returned, strapped the uncomplaining toddler into the seat again and remounted, his legs were ready.

So he had enough strength of his own, and had not needed what the Giver might have provided, had there been time.

But when the planes came, he wished that he could have received the courage.

He knew they were search planes. They flew so low that they woke him with the noise of their engines, and sometimes, looking out and up fearfully from the hiding places, he could almost see the faces of the searchers.

He knew that they could not see colour, and that their flesh, as well as Gabriel's light golden curls, would be no more than smears of grey against the colourless foliage. But he remembered from his science and technology studies at school that the search planes used heat-seeking devices which could identify body warmth and would hone in on two humans huddled in shrubbery.

So always, when he heard the aircraft sound, he reached to Gabriel and transmitted memories of snow, keeping some for himself. Together they became cold; and when the planes were gone, they would shiver, holding each other, until sleep came again.

Sometimes, urging the memories into Gabriel, Jonas felt that they were more shallow, a little weaker than they had been. It was what he had hoped, and what he and the Giver had planned: that as he moved away from the community, he would shed the memories and leave them behind for the people. But now, when he needed them, when the planes came, he tried hard to cling to what he still had, of cold, and to use it for their survival.

Usually the aircraft came by day, when they were

hiding. But he was alert at night, too, on the road, always listening intently for the sound of the engines. Even Gabriel listened, and would call out, 'Plane! Plane!' sometimes before Jonas had heard the terrifying noise. When the aircraft searchers came, as they did occasionally, during the night as they rode, Jonas sped to the nearest tree or bush, dropped to the ground, and made himself and Gabriel cold. But it was sometimes a frighteningly close call.

As he pedalled through the nights, through isolated landscape now, with the communities far behind and no sign of human habitation around him or ahead, he was constantly vigilant, looking for the next nearest hiding place should the sound of engines come.

But the frequency of the planes diminished. They came less often, and flew, when they did come, less slowly, as if the search had become haphazard and no longer hopeful. Finally there was an entire day and night when they did not come at all.



Now the landscape was changing. It was a subtle change, hard to identify at first. The road was narrower, and bumpy, apparently no longer tended by road crews. It was harder, suddenly, to balance on the bike, as the front wheel wobbled over stones and ruts.

One night Jonas fell, when the bike jolted to a sudden stop against a rock. He grabbed instinctively for Gabriel; and the newchild, strapped tightly in his seat, was uninjured, only frightened when the bike fell to its side. But Jonas's ankle was twisted and his knees were scraped and raw, blood seeping through his torn trousers. Painfully he righted himself and the bike, and reassured Gabe.

Tentatively he began to ride in daylight. He had forgotten the fear of the searchers, who seemed to have diminished into the past. But now there were new fears; the unfamiliar landscape held hidden, unknown perils.

Trees became more numerous, and the forests beside the road were dark and thick with mystery. They saw streams more frequently now and stopped often to drink. Jonas carefully washed his injured knees, wincing as he rubbed at the raw flesh. The constant ache of his swollen ankle was eased when he soaked it occasionally in the cold water that rushed through roadside gullies.

He was newly aware that Gabriel's safety depended entirely upon his own continued strength.

They saw their first waterfall, and for the first time wildlife.

'Plane! Plane!' Gabriel called, and Jonas turned swiftly into the trees, though he had not seen planes in days, and he did not hear an aircraft engine now. When he stopped the bicycle in the shrubbery and turned to grab Gabe, he saw the small chubby arm pointing towards the sky.

Terrified, he looked up, but it was not a plane at all. Though he had never seen one before, he identified it from his fading memories, for the Giver had given them to him often. It was a bird.

Soon there were many birds along the way, soaring overhead, calling. They saw deer; and once, beside the road, looking at them curious and unafraid, a small reddish-brown creature with a thick tail, whose name Jonas did not know. He slowed the bike and they stared at

one another until the creature turned away and disappeared into the woods.

All of it was new to him. After a life of Sameness and predictability, he was awed by the surprises that lay beyond each curve of the road. He slowed the bike again and again to look with wonder at wild flowers, to enjoy the throaty warble of a new bird nearby, or merely to watch the way wind shifted the leaves in the trees. During his twelve years in the community, he had never felt such simple moments of exquisite happiness.

But there were desperate fears building in him now as well. The most relentless of his new fears was that they would starve. Now that they had left the cultivated fields behind them, it was almost impossible to find food. They finished the meagre store of potatoes and carrots they had saved from the last agricultural area, and now they were always hungry.

Jonas knelt by a stream and tried without success to catch a fish with his hands. Frustrated, he threw rocks into the water, knowing even as he did so that it was useless. Finally, in desperation, he fashioned a makeshift net, looping the strands of Gabriel's blanket around a curved stick.

After countless tries, the net yielded two flopping silvery fish. Methodically Jonas hacked them to pieces

with a sharp rock and fed the raw shreds to himself and to Gabriel. They ate some berries, and tried without success to catch a bird.

At night, while Gabriel slept beside him, Jonas lay awake, tortured by hunger, and remembered his life in the community where meals were delivered to each dwelling every day.

He tried to use the flagging power of his memory to recreate meals, and managed brief, tantalising fragments: banquets with huge roasted meats; birthday parties with thick-frosted cakes; and lush fruits picked and eaten, sun-warmed and dripping, from trees.

But when the memory glimpses subsided, he was left with the gnawing, painful emptiness. Jonas remembered, suddenly and grimly, the time in his childhood when he had been chastised for misusing a word. The word had been 'starving'. You have never been starving, he had been told. You will never be starving.

Now he was. If he had stayed in the community, he would not be. It was as simple as that. Once he had yearned for choice. Then, when he had had a choice, he had made the wrong one: the choice to leave. And now he was starving.

But if he had stayed . . .

His thoughts continued. If he had stayed, he would

have starved in other ways. He would have lived a life hungry for feelings, for colour, for love.

And Gabriel? For Gabriel there would have been no life at all. So there had not really been a choice.

It became a struggle to ride the bicycle as Jonas weakened from lack of food, and realised at the same time that he was encountering something he had for a long time yearned to see: hills. His sprained ankle throbbed as he forced the pedal downwards in an effort that was almost beyond him.

And the weather was changing. It rained for two days. Jonas had never seen rain, though he had experienced it often in the memories. He had liked those rains, enjoyed the new feeling of it, but this was different. He and Gabriel came cold and wet, and it was hard to get dry, even when sunshine occasionally followed.

Gabriel had not cried during the long frightening journey. Now he did. He cried because he was hungry and cold and terribly weak. Jonas cried, too, for the same reasons, and another reason as well. He wept because he was afraid now that he could not save Gabriel. He no longer cared about himself.



Jonas felt more and more certain that the destination lay ahead of him, very near now in the night that was approaching. None of his senses confirmed it. He saw nothing ahead except the endless ribbon of road unfolding in twisting narrow curves. He heard no sound ahead.

Yet he felt it: felt that Elsewhere was not far away. But he had little hope left that he would be able to reach it. His hope diminished further when the sharp, cold air began to blur and thicken with swirling white.

Gabriel, wrapped in his inadequate blanket, was hunched, shivering, and silent in his little seat. Jonas stopped the bike wearily, lifted the child down, and realised with heartbreak how cold and weak Gabe had become.

Standing in the freezing mound that was thickening around his numb feet, Jonas opened his own tunic, held Gabriel to his bare chest, and tied the torn and dirty

blanket around them both. Gabriel moved feebly against him and whimpered briefly into the silence that surrounded them.

Dimly, from a nearly forgotten perception as blurred as the substance itself, Jonas recalled what the whiteness was.

'It's called snow, Gabe,' Jonas whispered. '*Snowflakes*. They fall down from the sky, and they're very beautiful.'

There was no response from the child who had once been so curious and alert. Jonas looked down through the dusk at the little head against his chest. Gabriel's curly hair was matted and filthy, and there were tear stains outlined in dirt on his pale cheeks. His eyes were closed. As Jonas watched, a snowflake drifted down and was caught briefly for a moment's sparkle in the tiny fluttering lashes.

Wearily he remounted the bicycle. A steep hill loomed ahead. In the best of conditions, the hill would have been a difficult, demanding ride. But now the rapidly deepening snow obscured the narrow road and made the ride impossible. His front wheel moved forward imperceptibly as he pushed on the pedals with his numb, exhausted legs. But the bicycle stopped. It would not move.

He got off and let it drop sideways into the snow. For a moment he thought how easy it would be to drop beside

it himself, to let himself and Gabriel slide into the softness of snow, the darkness of night, the warm comfort of sleep.

But he had come this far. He must try to go on.

The memories had fallen behind him now, escaping from his protection to return to the people of his community. Were there any left at all? Could he hold on to a last bit of warmth? Did he still have the strength to Give? Could Gabriel still Receive?

He pressed his hands into Gabriel's back and tried to remember sunshine. For a moment it seemed that nothing came to him, that his power was completely gone. Then it flickered suddenly, and he felt tiny tongues of heat begin to creep across and into his frozen feet and legs. He felt his face begin to glow and the tense, cold skin of his arms and hands relax. For a fleeting second he felt that he wanted to keep it for himself, to let himself bathe in sunlight, unburdened by anything or anyone else.

But the moment passed and was followed by an urge, a need, a passionate yearning to share the warmth with the one person left for him to love. Aching from the effort, he forced the memory of warmth into the thin, shivering body in his arms.

Gabriel stirred. For a moment they both were bathed in warmth and renewed strength as they stood hugging each other in the blinding snow.

Jonas began to walk up the hill.

The memory was agonisingly brief. He had trudged no more than a few yards through the night when it was gone and they were cold again.

But his mind was alert now. Warming himself ever so briefly had shaken away the lethargy and resignation and restored his will to survive. He began to walk faster on feet that he could no longer feel. But the hill was treacherously steep; he was impeded by the snow and his own lack of strength. He didn't make it very far before he stumbled and fell forward.

On his knees, unable to rise, Jonas tried a second time. His consciousness grasped at a wisp of another warm memory, and tried desperately to hold it there, to enlarge it, and pass it into Gabriel. His spirits and strength lifted with the momentary warmth and he stood. Again, Gabriel pressed against him as he began to climb.

But the memory faded, leaving him colder than before.

If only he had had time to receive more warmth from the Giver before he escaped! Maybe there would be more left for him now. But there was no purpose in if-onlys. His entire concentration now had to be on moving his feet, warming Gabriel and himself, and going forward.

He climbed, stopped, and warmed them both briefly

again, with a tiny scrap of memory that seemed certainly to be all he had left.

The top of the hill seemed so far away, and he did not know what lay beyond. But there was nothing left to do but continue. He trudged upwards.

As he approached the summit of the hill at last, something began to happen. He was not warmer; if anything, he felt more numb and more cold. He was not less exhausted; on the contrary, his steps were leaden, and he could barely move his freezing, tired legs.

But he began, suddenly, to feel happy. He began to recall happy times. He remembered his parents and his sister. He remembered his friends, Asher and Fiona. He remembered the Giver.

Memories of joy flooded through him suddenly.

He reached the place where the hill crested and he could feel the ground under his snow-covered feet become level. It would not be uphill any more.

'We're almost there, Gabriel,' he whispered, feeling quite certain without knowing why. 'I remember this place, Gabe.' And it was true. But it was not a grasping of a thin and burdensome recollection; this was different. This was something that he could keep. It was a memory of his own.

He hugged Gabriel and rubbed him briskly, warming

him, to keep him alive. The wind was bitterly cold. The snow swirled, blurring his vision. But somewhere ahead, through the blinding storm, he knew there was warmth and light.

Using his final strength, and a special knowledge that was deep inside him, Jonas found the sledge that was waiting for them at the top of the hill. Numbly his hands fumbled for the rope.

He settled himself on the sledge and hugged Gabe close. The hill was steep but the snow was powdery and soft, and he knew that this time there would be no ice, no fall, no pain. Inside his freezing body, his heart surged with hope.

They started down.

Jonas felt himself losing consciousness and with his whole being willed himself to stay upright atop the sledge, clutching Gabriel, keeping him safe. The runners sliced through the snow and the wind whipped at his face as they sped in a straight line through an incision that seemed to lead to the final destination, the place that he had always felt was waiting, the Elsewhere that held their future and their past.

He forced his eyes open as they went downwards, downwards, sliding, and all at once he could see lights, and he recognised them now. He knew they were shining

through the windows of rooms, that they were the red, blue and yellow lights that twinkled from trees in places where families created and kept memories, where they celebrated love.

Downwards, downwards, faster and faster. Suddenly he was aware with certainty and joy that below, ahead, they were waiting for him; and that they were waiting, too, for the baby. For the first time, he heard something that he knew to be music. He heard people singing.

Behind him, across vast distances of space and time, from the place he had left, he thought he heard music too. But perhaps it was only an echo.

A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR



It's hard to identify when I began to be aware that *The Giver* was different from the previous twenty-plus novels I had written for kids. Not while I was writing it, surely. I felt that I was writing an adventure story, trying to make each chapter a cliffhanger; well, I had done that precise thing in *Number the Stars* several years before. I was trying to create a likable, sympathetic main character with a lot of integrity and a certain amount of introspection: just what I had done in every book I had written for years, from *A Summer to Die* to *Anastasia Krupnik* and *Rabble Starkey*.

So it was not during the writing process, there at my desk for those weeks – eventually months – in 1993 that I realised something was unusual.

But it was also not the day that a radiogram with the

news of the Newbery Medal was slipped under the door of my cabin on a boat in Antarctica a year or so later.

It was someplace in between. It was when I began to hear from readers.

I have *always* heard from readers. *I like your book. It made me laugh. Please write back. Anastasia is just like me. Meg is just like me. J.P. is just like me. Please write back. Write more books. Put my name in a book. Send me your autograph.*

But suddenly, after *The Giver* was published, the tone of the letters was different. They still came, most of them, from young people. But now they were not class assignments. They weren't decorated with stickers and doodles.

Instead, they were long, carefully thought-out, passionate responses to a book that had raised questions in their minds: questions about their own lives, their own futures, decisions they were making, values that they were wondering about for the first time.

At the same time, there came letters from adults. Not the usual school librarians, not the occasional parent. These letters came from adults unrelated to the world of 'children's literature' – these were from adults who had probably not read a 'kids' book' since they were kids themselves. One came from the CEO of a major corporation. One from a Baptist minister. One from a

Trappist monk. One from a victim of a multiple-personality disorder. And countless others from the most ordinary of people who seemed, actually, to be startled that a book they picked up casually (*'My son asked me to read this.'* *'I picked this up at a bookstore because the cover looked intriguing.'* *'My cleaning lady recommended this book to me!'*) had so affected them that they felt compelled, for the first time in their lives, to contact an author.

My mailman, Jack, an affable guy, began to make wry comments about the weight of his bag. I gave him a large tip at Christmas. By the time I found myself in Antarctica that winter of the Newbery – surrounded by icebergs – I had begun to think that my mail, back home, was something of a tip-of-the-iceberg phenomenon.

The challenges came a little later. They took me by surprise. Suddenly there began to appear an occasional distraught letter from someone who called me 'godless' or 'perverted'.

'Jesus would not be pleased with you,' one woman wrote me in what appeared to be a trembling hand.

A website appeared devoted entirely to a denunciation of *The Giver* and referring to it – or perhaps to me; it wasn't quite clear – as The Antichrist.

I found my name on the official list of 'Most Challenged Authors' again and again.

A town in the Midwest removed the book from its public schools.

A public hearing was held in a California town to deal with '*The Giver* issue'.

And I suppose I should tell this part, too: one piece of mail was disconcerting enough that I had a conference with the FBI and was advised, for my own safety, not to visit a particular city in the USA in the immediate future.

The Giver began to be translated into other languages, and with its French title, *Le Passeur*, it was voted the favourite of the children of France and Belgium one year.

I was told that it was the first American children's book translated into Thai.

It was used in the tenth grade in German public schools. In Germany an entire population of young people must study the seduction of totalitarianism as part of their own country's tragic history. Many of them start by reading *The Giver*.

Today, as I write this, four cities/towns in the USA have selected *The Giver* as their 'community read' – the book that the entire town is asked to read, and then – picture this, a whole town! Adults and kids! What a wonderful thing! – to discuss.

Schools across the country make it part of their required reading. Christian churches use it as part of their religious

THE GIVER

curriculum. And at the same time, countless people give it as a Bar Mitzvah gift.

I could not possibly have planned any of this. I sat down in 1993 to write an adventure story and to explore, for my own reasons, the concept of the importance of memory in our lives.

Somehow, unintentionally, I tapped into something that fed a hunger out there.

It is not always a comfortable thing to be the centre of so much attention and controversy. But it makes me think about what it means to be 'comfortable' – the very thing that the community of *The Giver* had achieved at such a great price. It was a community without danger or pain. But it was also a community without music, colour or art. And it was a community without books.

LOIS LOWRY